

Bandwagon

Vol. 58 No. 3 2014

3 CIRCUSES IN 3 RINGS



P.T. BARNUM

1 HIPPODROME WITH 1/2 MILE TRACK



J.A. BAILEY

1 MUSEUM OF LIVING CURIOSITIES



J.L. HUTCHINSON

2 MENAGERIES IN 2 TENTS

1 ELEVATED STAGE, SIZE 60-80 FT. FOR OLYMPIAN GAMES

8 UNITED MONSTER SHOWS

P.T. BARNUM'S GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH, & THE GREAT LONDON CIRCUS COMBINED WITH




OBSTACLE RACE
ILLUSTRATING ABSURD SITUATIONS, SIDE SPLITTING MISHAPS, LAUGHABLE COMICALITIES, AWKWARD MANEUVERS, WORLD OF FUN, THE CRAZE OF PARIS, AND FROLIC THE FIRST TIME IN AMERICA.

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J.A. BAILEY

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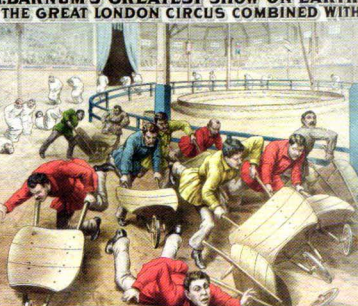


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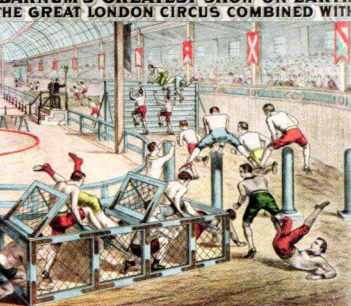


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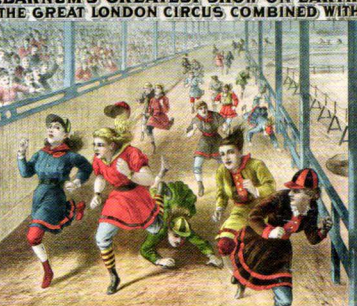


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LADIES FOOT RACE
A RACE AND A FEMALE POSTCHASER OF PARIS NEW AND FIRST TIME IN AMERICA.

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BARNUM, BAILEY & HUTCHINSON, — SOLE OWNERS. —

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The Circus Historical Society seeks to encourage the highest level of research, scholarship and writing about American circus history through the Stuart Thayer Prize. The award is named in honor of premier circus historian Stuart Thayer, whose published works on the American circus are among the most notable resources for contemporary historians.

The annual prize, awarded by a committee appointed by the Circus Historical Society president, recognizes superior works of scholarship pertaining to American circus history.

Nominations for the Stuart Thayer Prize may be submitted by current members of CHS. Works can be in any printed format including book, article, pamphlet, booklet, bibliography or catalog. Works that are loaded on a permanent website may also be considered.

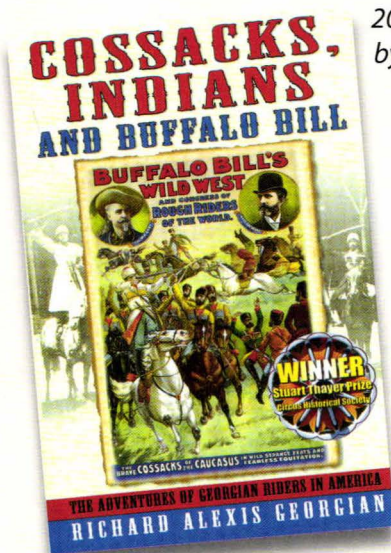
The deadline for the next Stuart Thayer Prize, to be awarded at the 2015 CHS Conference, is March 31, 2015.

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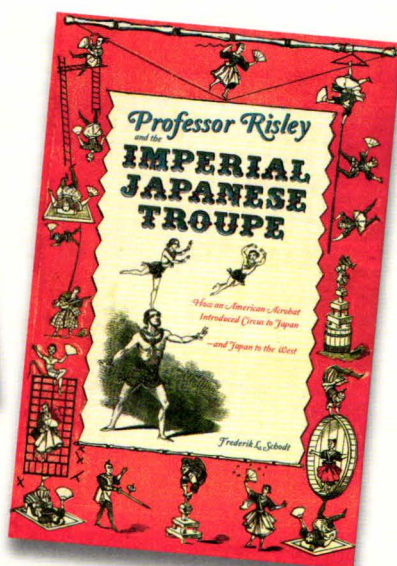
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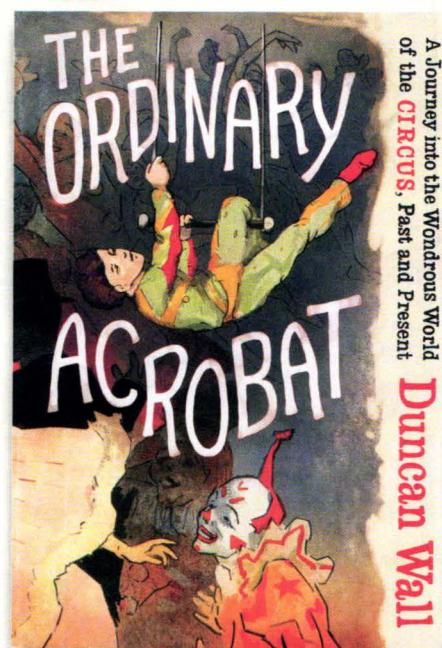
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Eligibility

Content. A nominated work must be substantially about American circus history or a very closely related topic.

Format. Works may be in any printed form: book, article, pamphlet, booklet, bibliography, compendium of essays, exhibit or sales catalogue, a single essay that is part of a larger work, or an original work contained in digital format on a disk or loaded on a permanent website.

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Complete details and the nomination form can be downloaded from the CHS website at www.circushistory.org/ThayerPrize.htm or by writing:

Stuart Thayer Prize, c/o Fred D. Pfening III, 1075 W. Fifth Ave, Columbus OH 43212

Bandwagon

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society
2014 Volume 58, Number 3

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Bandwagon: The Journal of the Circus Historical Society (USPS 406-390) (ISSN 0005-4968) is published by the Circus Historical Society for its members.

Office of Publication

1075 West Fifth Avenue, Columbus OH 43212 with additional entry at Jefferson City MO. Periodical postage paid at Columbus OH and additional entry offices. Postmaster: send all address changes to Bandwagon: The Journal of the Circus Historical Society, 1075 Fifth Avenue, Columbus OH 43212.

Membership Rate

Circus Historical Society membership is \$60.00 annually in the United States, \$80.00 annually in Canada, and \$105.00 annually for international members. Membership application and information are available on the CHS website at www.circushistory.org or by contacting the Bandwagon office.

Website and Back Issues

An index of *Bandwagon* articles from earlier issues is available online at www.circushistory.org. Back issues are available from the Office of Publication.

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Robert Stickney and other contemporary leapers competed to see who could make the longest, highest, and most dramatic jumps. This 1886 poster was printed by Strobridge.

Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection



Circus Historical Society

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Mission Statement

*"To preserve, promote, and share
through education the history and
cultural significance of the circus and
allied arts, past and present."*

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Note from the Editor

This issue of *Bandwagon* offers readers a fascinating mixture of scholarship relating circus topics to history, culture, politics, and language. I am very excited to be able to print the research of two up and coming scholars whose contributions remind us of the wonderful range of research and thought still to be done on topics in circus. Savannah Handerson, a literature student at New College of Florida, looks at circus advertising materials of the late 19th century to investigate how American literacy was tied to an ongoing effort to instill moral values in a rapidly changing population. Jason Martin, a student in the graduate program for Archival Studies and Library Sciences at the University of British Columbia, explores the significance of circus imagery in political illustrations from the British popular press. Bridging the gap between these two contributions, circus historian and *Bandwagon's* Associate Editor, Fred Dahlinger, Jr., contributes a study of the popular phrase "Getting into the Bandwagon," marrying language, politics, and circus. CHS Trustee, Steve Gossard has completed a fascinating study of the winter routes followed by Frank Gardner and other American showmen and women of the later 19th century. The result brings to life the story of a remarkable group of performers who spent their off-seasons presenting an array of American circus talents to South America and the Caribbean. The chronicle provides an interesting glimpse into the allegiances and partnerships between many different performers of the day. And Larry Kellogg shares a fun mystery in his piece about an unusual piece of circus advertising.

Great thanks are obviously due to these authors for sharing their work with the Circus Historical Society community. Each one has brought such a unique focus, giving us new ways to think about a subject we care so much about. Fred Dahlinger's thoughtful comments were especially helpful in early drafts from our newest contributors. In the midst of a number of other responsibilities, Pete Shrake at Circus World once again was incredibly gracious in his willingness to find and scan images to accompany several of the articles. Similarly, Ron Levere at The Ringling was instrumental in providing images for this issue. And once again, thanks are owed to the fantastic team at QDX Design for putting together words and images into the wonderful publication you hold in your hands.

JLP

Circus Historical Society

The Circus Historical Society's mission is to preserve, promote, and share through education, the history, and cultural significance of the circus and allied arts, past and present.

Founded in 1939, the Circus Historical Society, Inc. (CHS) is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit educational organization. Membership includes people from all walks of life including historians, scholars, circus personnel, memorabilia collectors, Americana specialists, and individuals who share both a love of the circus and a desire to preserve and disseminate its great and interesting heritage.

Benefits of membership include a subscription to CHS's journal, *Bandwagon*. The journal features a range of research and articles related to the rich history of the circus. Article types vary from intensively researched historical essays to wonderfully vivid oral histories that capture the stories of individuals from all aspects of the circus world. Members also receive newsletters filled with fascinating circus facts and news from members, circuses, museums, and other related groups around the world.



Frederick W. Glasier, circa 1905.

Courtesy of the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Frederick W. Glasier Collection

CHS members gather annually at a different location in North America to hold a convention. Papers are given, films and slides are presented, meaty tidbits of circus history are exchanged, current circus executives set forth their views and challenges, friendships are renewed and new ones made, all in the interest of circus history preservation. These sessions represent the culmination of a focused year of circus research and writings on the part of many CHS members and are cherished visits to the circus past and present.

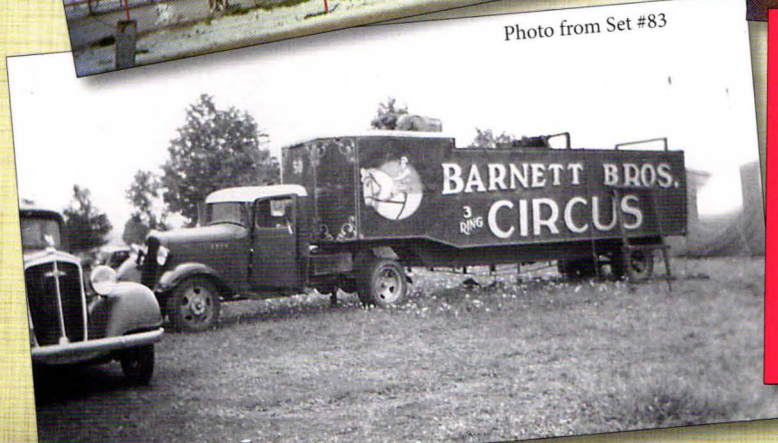
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We have three copies of the hardback book *Give 'em a John Robinson* from Dick Conover's collection. They are 40 years old and in perfect condition as they have never been opened.

First come, first served at \$25.00 + \$ 5.00 shipping.

About the Cover

Barnum & London's Obstacle Race

by Jennifer Lemmer Posey

The hippodrome races that followed the main performance are a seldom explored facet of the late 19th century circus experience. While racing, especially on horseback, has been a component of circus performances since their beginnings, they became a focus of advertising in the press, newspaper ads, and posters. Increasingly mentioned throughout the 1880s, the races went from a few heats of flat races, hurdle races, and chariot races to crowd thrilling contests between exotic animals, or men and beasts, or the Roman style of racing while standing astride the backs of two horses.

By the mid-19th century, circuses had begun employing the term "Hippodrome" in their show titles, like Dan Rice's Hippodrome of 1852. The term comes from the Latin *hippodromos*, or race course, by way of France, where the relationship was established first to horse racing of various types, and ultimately to the display of the races and feats of horsemanship for pleasure. In 1853, Ravenna, Ohio was promised "A Grand Restoration of the Ancient Sports, Games, and Ceremonies of the Greeks and Romans" to be displayed by Welch's Parisian Hippodrome on August 26, while on the 28th of September, Franconi's Traveling Hippodrome would include "three chariots – two horses abreast! Driven by ladies in animated contest for the prizes of the Hippodrome" and "three horsemen, riding two horses each, at full speed while standing up..."¹

For the audiences, the excitement of the competitions was a lively send off after the thrills of the main show. Circus owners encouraged stiff competition in a variety of contests by offers of a "Cash Premium given to every winner." While the horse racing was the primary form of contest staged as an aftershow, audiences of the 1870s were also thrilled by fierce leaping contests between such talents as Franck Gardner, William Batcheller, and Fred O'Brien.³

About halfway through their 1882 season opening at Madison Square Garden in New York, the proprietors of the Barnum & London show funded a renovation of the building, demolishing walls to eliminate several small spaces, and open the performance area into "one grand room."⁴ This allowed for a widening of the track to 40 feet wide, providing additional space for the races and processions. An April 4, 1882 review in the *New York Times* commented on the "bewildering effect" of the three ring presentation (still quite an innovation in its second season) and on the "new features of the evening's entertainment," the hippodrome races.⁵ The

races received a new level of attention that would grow for the next several years.

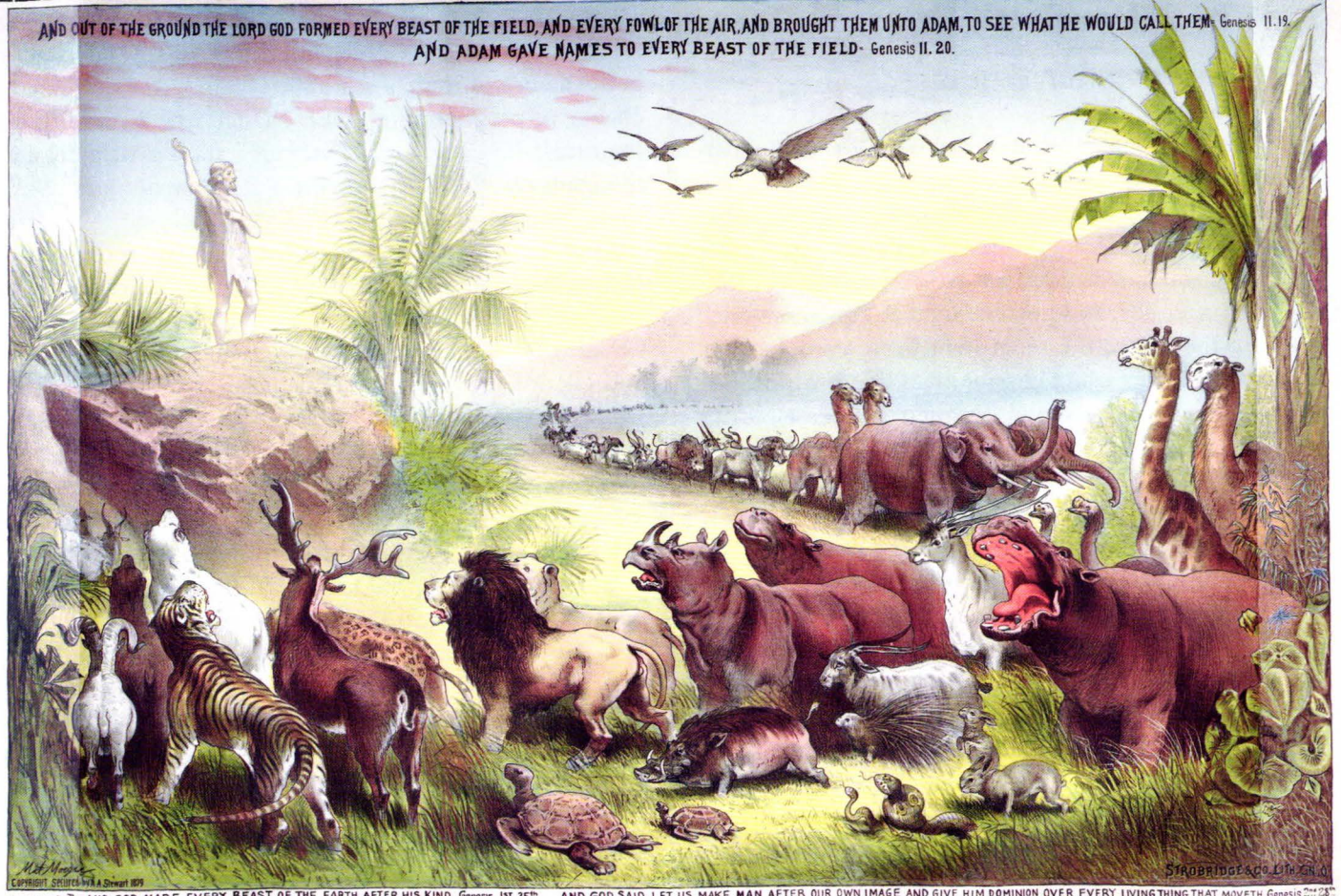
In 1883, Barnum & London once again changed the arrangements in the Garden after the first several weeks of performance. A rank of seating was removed to allow for "a change of programming." This change was the addition of the races. *The New York Times* ran a short article detailing the contests which began with "a gentleman's jockey race, three times around the track." Other enthralling races included the race between a man and a horse, in which the man ultimately triumphed. A ladies hurdle race ensued, followed by racing ponies ridden by monkeys, and Roman standing races. The article goes on to describe wheelbarrow and chariot races. It promised that the next performance would conclude with a "new and original obstacle race, which was participated in by half a hundred employees of the show."⁶ The following year, the reviews vividly described this race "in which about 40 boys in coats of many colors scrambled over gates and bars, crawled over and under a number of boxes, and ended up by squirming through and over about 60 feet of netting..."⁷

This entertaining, new feature that was highlighted in the 1883 Barnum & London posters graces this issue's cover. Printed by the Strobridge Lithographing Co. for the circus, all four posters are now part of the Tibbals Collection at the Ringling Museum. **Bw**

Endnotes

1. *Portage Sentinel* (Ravenna, Ohio), August 24, 1853.
2. Barnum & London 1884 Route Book page 31.
3. For a fascinating look at the leaping contests of the late 19th century, see Steve Gossard, "Frank Gardner and the Great Leapers," *Bandwagon* (July-August 1990), pp. 12-25.
4. "Barnum's Roman Hippodrome: Preparing Madison-Square Garden for This Week's Performances" *New York Times*, April 2, 1882, p. 2.
5. "Barnum's Show" *New York Times*, April 4, 1882, p. 4.
6. "Sports of the Hippodrome: The Change in Program at the Circus" *New York Times*, April 10, 1883, p. 5.
7. "Crowds at the Circus" *New York Times*, April 8, 1884, p. 2.

THE CREATION AS ILLUSTRATED BY ADAM FOREPAUGH'S NOACHIAN MENAGERIE.



ALL OF THESE GREAT AND RARE WONDERS TO BE SEEN ONLY IN **THE GREAT FOREPAUGH SHOW**

Figure 1. Strobridge Lithograph Co., Adam Forepaugh: Genesis 11.20, 1879.

Literacy and Language in the American Circus Poster

by Savannah Handerson, images from the Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

Introduction

The poster has been recognized as “the medium that shaped the public image of the circus, while also serving as an essential element in the organization’s business operation.”¹ During the early twentieth century, show printers would often be the single biggest vendor for larger American circuses.² In an article for *Billboard*, W. E. Franklin, a publicist, defined the spirit of the American circus enterprise in three words, “Printing, Parade and Performance,”³ and this pro-

cess was so excessive that citizens in small American towns considered it almost as entertaining as the actual arrival of the circus.⁴ Eventually, the posters and the heralds became as essential an element to the image of the circus as the performance aspect.

Given the prolific presence of both the posters and the heralds, it stands to reason that the language of these printed advertisements can be examined as a measure of American literacy and the country’s changing educational system.

The socio-cultural language used in American promotional circus posters demonstrates the enterprise's awareness and comprehension of what can now be recognized as a 19th century literacy boom. The literacy program developed in 19th century America not only taught reading skills, it also served as a means to introduce a moral foundation in a country that sought to balance luxuries of the capitalist market with the ethics of its Protestant forefathers. To mitigate associations with base entertainment, and to profit as a business, the American circus used language in advertisements as a means to frame acts and features as educational and moral in addition to being entertaining.

The term "literacy boom" spans the 19th century when a large push for people to become literate emerged out of a need to further the developing capitalist nation. It became clear that education, specifically literacy, would assist individuals specializing in trades, opening opportunities for advancement—a chance to live "the American Dream." In his book, *The Literacy Myth: Cultural Integration and Social Structure in the Nineteenth Century*, Harvey J. Graff states that, "By the end of the first third of the 19th century, opposition to the universal institutional schooling of the masses had largely vanished in Anglo-America and in much of Western Europe."⁵ People were urged to educate themselves and their children in order to make America a competitive world power.

Within the larger American educational movement, reading skills were taught using specific literature that emphasized a moral foundation based upon Christian values. This was assumed to prevent the corruption of the working social order in America that was being exposed to the unsavory moral breeches associated with capitalism. The belief was that building an educated society through such texts would help offset the temptations of the modern urban society.⁶

Moral Language in Literacy

As previously mentioned, the 19th century was a time of great change, educationally, in America. In the democratized society, the elite hold over the privilege of education was broken down and new movements encouraged educational opportunities for the masses.⁷ The "common man" was given a new form of authority over the social, moral, aesthetic, and religious choices allotted to them in life.⁸ But, the idea of a "common man" became another imperative American value, especially when preached alongside the capitalist values defining America at that time. That is, the idea of every man starting out equally with infinite potential to create one's own success.

However this capitalist-based society, while valuable in the individual sense, was perceived to be dangerous to society as there was no value placed on morality. Thus, schooling became stressed for the stability of American society.

The underlying goals included reduced crime and disorder, installation of moral values and codes of conduct and finally, increased economic productivity. Using literature imbedded with morality was a way to cohesively secure social, cultural, economic, and political unity in an expanding capitalist environment.

Being literate in America became a cultural requirement, and "...its possession or absence was assumed to represent either a symbol or a symptom of the progress in moral training or an index of what remained to be accomplished through the creation of educational systems embracing all the children of the community."⁹ Within the context of religion, Protestantism's implied mission to share the "Word of God" was a primary influence on the few societies that obtained total adult literacy before the push in the 19th Century.¹⁰

Using literacy as a way to instill moral values at the time was, in itself, a paradox. This is because morality, as shaped by the codes of that time, stressed the potentially dangerous uses of literature. Thus, children were encouraged to read, but only the right kind of literature. Lydia Maria Child's selection from *The Mother's Book* states, "The books chosen for young people should as far as possible combine amusement with instruction; but it is very important that amusement should not become a necessary inducement."¹¹ Therein lies the cultural idea that amusement should always be accompanied by education, and that the desire for education should be the integral driving force. This American value was, of course, responsible for the circus' emphasis on educational features.¹² Impresarios recognized that this sentiment would inhibit their ability to profit as a business if the circus was promoted as strictly entertainment.

Child also goes on to say that books for youth should not have morals attached to the ending, but rather they should have characters that exhibit strong and valuable morals throughout the text. Essentially, "It is better to paint virtue to be intimidated, than vice to be shunned."¹³ From the standpoint of malleable youth, the influence that these teachings supposedly had would, "elevate and assimilate the population and insure peace, prosperity, and social cohesion."¹⁴

Naturally, literature changed with educational developments and widespread schooling. In a nation founded on religious morals, it would stand that anything being read by the masses would use language that showed America's particular reverence for Christian-based morals. This "ensured that literacy could not be promoted or comprehended in isolation from morality."¹⁵

For example, [Figure 1] P.T. Barnum and Adam Forepaugh, both dominating circus impresarios of their time, use the Creation story from Genesis to advertise their menageries. Terms like "reflecting" and "illustrated" imply that their menagerie is implicitly religious because of their innate ability to channel the original Creation. By using lan-

CANNON SHOTS
STRONG, COMMON-SENSE WORDS
 FROM
THE GREAT
P. T. BARNUM AND LONDON
 7 SEVEN 7
UNITED MONSTER SHOWS
 WHICH IT WILL PAY YOU WELL TO HEED.



You all know that every Manager and Circus visiting you loudly boasts of being

"The Largest Show in the World"

and you ought to know that this is the easiest and cheapest of all cheap things to do, for bombast costs nothing, big words are plenty, and reckless lying an easy art. But **PROOF** is a horse of quite a different color. This is a very proper time to plainly ask, **WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCE** with self-styled "Big Shows," which have made, and will forever continue to make, the biggest kind of entirely unsupported pretensions and unfounded promises! Is it not that they are "big" only in the discreditable sense of being **THE BIGGEST KIND OF UNMITIGATED FRAUDS**, full of empty advance assertion, while what comes on the day of exhibition is **THINNER THAN A WINTRY MOONBEAM**.

NOW WEIGH THE EVIDENCE.

Can any of you point out one grain of **POSITIVE PROOF** that they are, in reality, anything more than **Side Shows** staggering under big titles? You do not need spectacles to see that

They all employ the same Cheap Stock Devices to Deceive.
 Precisely the same Cheap Stock Advertisements.
 Precisely the same Cheap Stock Cuts.
 Precisely the same Cheap Stock Adjectives.
 Precisely the same old-time Cheap Stock Bills.

And when what little there is of substance to them arrives,
 Make precisely the same Monotonous, Dingy, Dreary, Cheap Parade.
 Precisely the same Cheap Appearance on the Show Ground, and give
 Precisely the same Cheap, Stale and Antiquated Performance.

Their one cheap and chunky hope is that, because they have said you cheap, by fraudulently inducing you to come to town, you will the same patronize their cheap shows.

A Plain Business Question.

In paying your money for amusement, why, then, do you not adhere to the same common-sense rule that governs you in buying anything else? Try patronizing and encouraging only such a reputable and respectable Show as proves its right to the title of "Big," and going where you are sure to get the most for your money, and the worth of it, instead of worse than wasting it by feeding paper concerns, which a moment's consideration will satisfy you

Do not plainly and squarely, legally or morally, commit themselves to give you value received in any particular,

but pick your pockets, while laughing your intelligence, by feeding your credulity with trashy and unmeaning promises. When you leave their empty tents, **YOU CANNOT EVEN TELL WHAT YOU EXPECTED TO SEE WHEN YOU WENT THERE**, and only know you were told it was **"THE LARGEST SHOW IN THE WORLD,"** and walked blindly into it, without consulting either common sense or experience, and walked out with the uncomfortable feeling of being laughed at, by sharper, for fools.

This is a PLAIN WAY OF PUTTING IT

but it is just the kind of straight-forward talk some of you need, and is given, in all kindness and candor, by a management which

Proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that it will positively bring you all and everything it advertises,

can afford to protect both you and itself, by plainly exposing False Pretences and Fraudulent Advertisers, and gives an **Exhibition of such Superlative Size, Morality and Satisfaction**, that it is

Patronized by Tens of Thousands who never visit any other Traveling Show.

THE WISE WILL PROFIT BY THESE WORDS

guage that relates this form of entertainment to the Bible and God himself, they are creating a wholesome image that would align them with the powerful Christian presence in America. Barnum's poster simply references the Creation once, and there is a decisive lack in words above the image. However, in Forepaugh's Creation poster, they use the term "Noachian," which references the time on Earth in which Noah was present, and it uses four different passages from Genesis that deal with the Creation of all the animals, Adam naming God's creations and, interestingly, Genesis 1:27-28, which is about God bestowing power over all the creatures on Earth to Man. The presence of these passages, the language used in the header of the advertisement and the fact that the Creation story appears on two different circus posters, two years apart demonstrates the extent and persistence by which circuses formed and insisted on having a God-fearing image.

P. T. Barnum would use morally weighted language frequently in his advertising materials. [Figure 2]. One of the first phrases a reader would notice on the 1882 herald implores those who come to the Barnum show to "pay heed" to the "strong, common-sense" words that are supposedly to come from Barnum himself. The advertisement's insistence that the word of Barnum be paid "heed" to implies a pseudo priest-and-flock relationship between the impresario, and, as an extension of himself, his circus with the general population that pays to spend time witnessing miracles under the canvas.

This particular herald also uses language that inadvertently stresses proper morals by implying that Barnum's show is singularly honest among an enterprise of exaggerators and liars. In fine print, the herald reads, "The Largest Show in the World and you ought to know that this is the easiest and cheapest of all cheap things to do, for bombast costs nothing, big words are plenty a drug, and reckless lying an easy art." This clearly admonishing language implies that the Barnum circus is morally sound, as an honest institution, while using language that inversely instructs the general populace on proper social code. This herald is a prime example of the moral criteria that 19th century society would have been using to judge their surroundings. There are further examples of this advertisement imploring their readers to "weigh the evidence," and there is a strong insistence on the "plain" way that they do business. This is clearly ironic because, though they insist on an honest image, circus advertising often stretched the descriptions of acts in order to draw the largest crowd. Nevertheless, honesty was a priority for their public image in an increasingly moral environment.

"Barnum and Bailey: Truthful Moral Instructive" of

Figure 2. Boston Job Print, Barnum & London: July 14, 1882 Herald.

1889 [Figure 3] boldly exemplifies the Christian-based American value system with phrases and terms such as “honorably conducted,” “honestly presented,” “truthful,” “moral” and “instructive,” in balance with traditional entertainment adjectives like “wild,” “grand” and “monster.” Simultaneously, it uses language inspired by the union of the two circuses that, again, mirrors the greater American mission to establish themselves amongst other world players. Two examples of this sentiment appear on this poster, consisting of the phrase “The whole world in contribution,” and the insisted inclusion of the daily expenses and amount of capital invested in the circus. For starters, the line “whole world in contribution,” indicates to the reader that the circus, and thus the American people, can claim superiority over the exotic and foreign spectacles included in the show.

Furthermore, at the bottom of the poster, they’ve included their average daily expenses, which amounts to \$6,800, and the amount of capital invested in the circus as a whole, a whopping \$3,000,000. Whether reliable numbers or not, they serve to remind potential audiences that this is a show of the highest quality. The inclusion of these money figures functions much in the same way that circus acts were used to draw in the public. That is, a certain impact would have been attributed to three-million dollars and Americans would have been motivated to go just to understand what three-million dollars could possibly encompass.

The next example of American circus posters using Christian morality-based language can be seen in the poster advertising the Könyöt Family [Figure 4], printed in 1909. Imagery and text in this poster places great emphasis on the family relationship. In Ephesians 6:1-3, the Bible states, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” Here, the Bible is emphasizing the value of children honoring their parents, which formed the 19th century American moral of valuing the family for the purpose of security in the rapidly changing culture. This poster incorporates a central portrait of the Könyöts as a valuable unit, suggesting the circus’ family-friendly nature. When a troupe is performing these dangerous feats in a coordinated way, they are setting an example for the ideal American family functioning together for the benefit of the whole. The term “family” and implied values such as determination, commitment and practice embodies many morals that would have been valued in changing America.

The Implications Associated with Illiteracy

As education became more widely available, society’s opinions became stronger about the illiterate. In fact, Graff goes so far as to say that “those without the experience of education and without its badge of literacy, have been per-

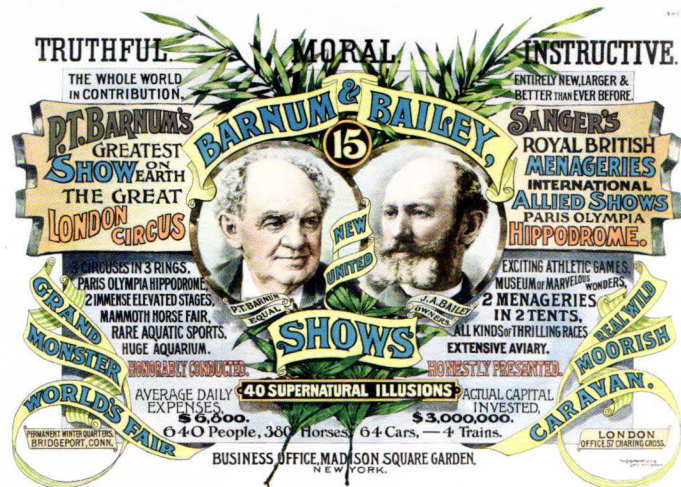


Figure 3. Strobridge Lithograph Co., Barnum & Bailey: Truthful Moral Instructive, 1889.

ceived as inferior and pathetic, alien to the dominant culture, subversive to social order, unequipped to achieve or produce, and denizens of self-perpetuating cultures of poverty.”¹⁶ Furthermore, those that were illiterate were perceived to be more prone to committing crime, they were considered anti-social and, as they were typically migrants, they were considered to be from “inferior” places of origin. These parameters created a very visible “other” that could not comply with ideal American morals and values and, as a consequence, they were ostracized. This caused a “culture of poverty” that trapped and paralyzed this class of individuals, despite their general reputation as wanderers or rootless, due to their status as immigrants. Aside from becoming an example of what not to do, they were generally seen as a hindrance to society, because they threatened control and social progress realistically and symbolically.¹⁷

The circus, as primarily a business, resorted to becoming an “educational” institution. They began to balance the line between being a form of entertainment, and a place where families could also learn, as a way to distance themselves from potential diminishment, as only a place of frivolity.

Revealing the circus’ switch from gas jets to electricity in 1879, “Great London Circus: Electric Light” [Figure 5] relies upon some of the previously mentioned trends in circus advertisement, such as announcing their recent return from a trip around the globe, and repeatedly referencing monetary and size-based statistics. However, it is also stressed that the circus is bringing the public modern technology, which, for a spectator, would be both thrilling and educational in a changing age. The concept of a safe form of lighting that did not pose a fire hazard in America would have been innovative and exciting, and would bring with it potential for economic growth. Not only that, it offered a whole new viewing experience for the audience, as electric lights replaced the sulfur lights under the big top.



Figure 4. Strobridge Lithograph Co., Barnum & Bailey: Könyöt Family, 1909.

Published in 1879 “Adam Forepaugh: 12 Asiatic Elephants” [Figure 6] exemplifies two essential elements, the training of exotic animals and the exploration of new cultures, which became popular ways to introduce learning into their entertainment. The poster reads, “12 educated Asiatic elephants in examples of brute culture.” Menageries were generally accepted as offering zoological knowledge on animals that people would never have encountered in day to day life. More than that, however, the taming of these animals offers insights into human and animal psychology, and symbolizes the knowledge that humans have over animals. The poster states that they are “educated,” and this would be a large draw to the American populace already obsessed with the cultural connotations of lacking education. Furthermore, the fact that the animals are “Asiatic” and performing feats of “brute culture” implies that the audience will be able to experience the exotic first hand and expand their own understanding of foreign cultures. This, again, plays on the need that Americans had to be seen as educated.

“Barnum & London: June 15, 1881 [Figure 7],” was

published by James Reilly in 1881, and features the largest combination of all the trends that have thus far been demonstrated. For instance, this herald references the capital invested and actual daily expenses like the “Barnum & Bailey: Truthful Moral Instructive” poster, by saying they invested \$3,000,000 initially, and continue to spend \$4,500 daily. As previously discussed, this focus on monetary values shows the extent of the influence of capitalism on Americans, and also serves as an impressive statement to the multitudes of spectators that were otherwise unaccustomed to such sums. In that same vein, the herald also refers to the size of the circus by saying that it was, “absolutely Noachian in its immensity and faultless in its completeness.” The term Noachian, referring to Noah from the Bible, was previously mentioned in the Forepaugh poster that advertised his menagerie via scenes from the Creation. This literal Christian term, being used as a size measure, alongside the herald’s insistence that they “never advertise anything we do not exhibit,” exhibits the previously established influence of Christianity itself and its accompanying Christian morals on the language of

10 SHOWS IN ONE COMBINED { **THE GREAT LONDON CIRCUS** } **10 TENTS ONE TICKET CONSOLIDATED**
SANGER'S ROYAL BRITISH MENAGERIE.

AN ARTIFICIAL SUN MAKING NIGHT AS BRIGHT AS DAY, BURNING BRILLIANTLY UNDER WATER ILLUMINATING A RADIUS OF 2 MILES GLOWING WITH A PHOSPHORESCENT EFFULGENCE And Still no Heat No Danger from Fire or Fears of Panic. OUR VAST PAVILLIONS OF 168,000 YARDS & TENTS MADE CONSPICUOUS BY ITS BRILLIANT ILLUMINATION. THIS Electric Light IS SO VERY POWERFUL that it causes a flame of GAS TO THROW OUT A SHADOW.

PERFECT AND CLEAR AS MID-DAY SUN-LIGHT.

MOST REMARKABLE INVENTION OF THE AGE... STEAM AND THE TELEGRAPH ECLIPSED.

NO MORE DANGER FROM COAL OIL OR NAPHTHA EXPLOSIONS... IN OPERATION DAY AND NIGHT.

BRILLIANT AS THE NOONDAY SUN the intense BRIGHTNESS OF THE ELECTRIC LIGHT is clear cold and Beautiful AND IN NO WAY IRRITATING TO THE WEAKEST EYE. IN OPERATION NIGHT & DAY, causing no heat or danger from explosion like Gas or Oil, ALL COLORS EASILY DISTINGUISHABLE, A PURE WHITE LIGHT DISCERNABLE FULLY 2 MILES AND A SIGHT WORTH TRAVELLING 500 MILES TO SEE. 18 ELECTRIC CHANDELIERS EQUAL TO 35,000 GAS-JETS, 40 Horse Power Boiler, 30 Horse Power Engine, 900 REVOLUTIONS PER MINUTE, THE FEATURE OF THE AGE.

THIS ENGINE & BOILER WAS BUILT EXPRESSLY FOR US BY THE FITCHBURG STEAM ENGINE CO. FITCHBURG, MASS.

STROBRIDGE & CO. LITHO. A.

UNITED WITH { COOPER, BAILEY & CO. } 10 ALLIED SHOWS.
THE GREAT INTERNATIONAL

Figure 5. Strobridge Lithograph Co., Cooper & Bailey, Great London: Electric Light, 1879.

ideal, wholesome Americans in this era.

Furthermore, this herald features an ad for Barnum's autobiography, *The Life of P.T. Barnum*. At the bottom of the poster it says, "There will be found a great fund of information and amusement." Therefore, there is not only an advertisement for a book, which points towards his preferable audience needing to be literate, but there is also a combination of the terms, "information" and "amusement," as their sales pitch. This, again, embodies the previously discussed angle circuses relied upon in order to appeal to the majority of newly educated Americans while still implying the ability to divert and delight.

In the poster titled "Barnum and Bailey: Startling and Sublime Exhibition," [Figure 8] released in 1894, there are two instances that exhibit this balanced language. The text reads, "Startling and Sublime Exhibition of Savage Wild Beasts and Domestic Animals, Exemplifying the Divine Decree that 'The Lion and the Lamb Shall Lie Down Together.'" This language is highly elevated with terms like "sublime exhibition," indicating the quality and moral value of the act.

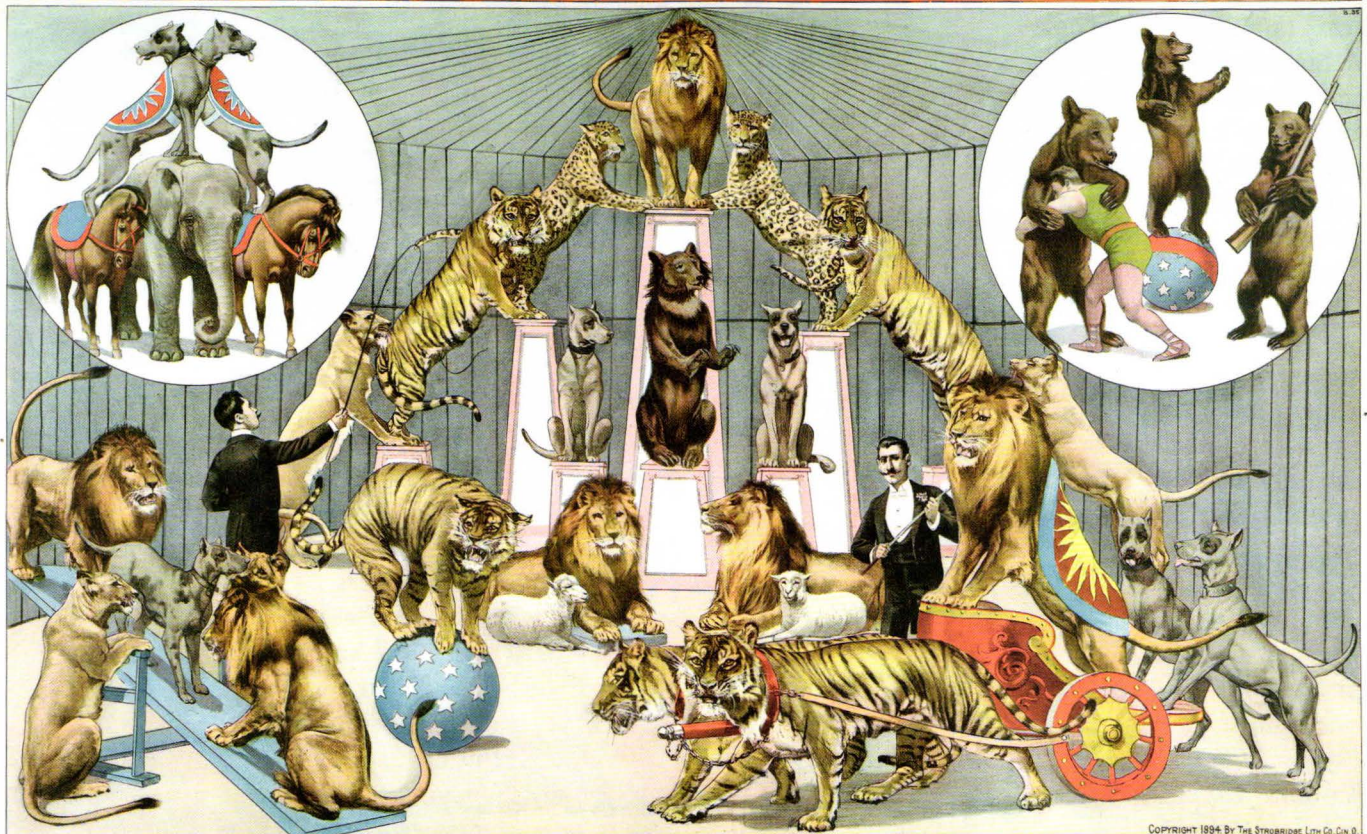
Additionally, the claim is that the exhibit will bring together savage and domesticated animals in a scene of harmony that embodies the divine decree. Man's domination over beasts

12 EDUCATED ASIATIC ELEPHANTS IN EXAMPLES OF BRUTE CULTURE.



Figure 6. Strobridge Lithograph Co., Adam Forepaugh: 12 Asiatic Elephants, 1879.

The Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth



COPYRIGHT 1894 BY THE STROBRIDGE LITH CO. CHICAGO.

STARTLING AND SUBLIME EXHIBITION OF SAVAGE WILD BEASTS AND DOMESTIC ANIMALS, EXEMPLIFYING THE DIVINE DECREE THAT "THE LION AND THE LAMB SHALL LIE DOWN TOGETHER."

THE WORLD'S GRANDEST, LARGEST, BEST AMUSEMENT INSTITUTION

Figure 8. Strobridge Lithograph Co., Barnum and Bailey: Startling and Sublime Savage Wild Beasts, 1894.

reached for anything they could to establish themselves as educated. Given the potential revenue loss, the circus had to find a balance between being entertaining and educational. Thus, the circus as an "Amusement Institution" evolved as a way for Americans to justify having fun.

The evolution of the American circus poster does not end there, though. If one traces the evolution of the poster historically, there is a noted decrease in the amount of words on the poster. Though this effect made the few words present more noticeable, it also reflected a larger cultural issue. That is, the American people were in a scientific age that lent itself more toward "particular points of observation and analysis."¹⁸ People were looking more to proto-scientific descriptions to satiate their visual interpretations.

For example, in the poster entitled "Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey: The Siamese Twins" [Figure 9] circa 1930, the indicative and precise language still maintains strong Christian-based morale. The first being that the

Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus made sure to convey through image and text, that these human oddities would be "presented with their brides." In Proverbs 18:22 it is stated that, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD." This is an attempt at showing that even the strangest of features in the circus can, and do, uphold one of the most basic cultural and social requirements of the 19th and 20th Century. That is, despite the fact that these "Siamese twins" are considered an error on the part of human genetics, the circus makes it apparent that they can adhere to monogamy, which is a highly held value within the Christian ethic. This poster would appease and encourage the American public because it shows that the people working for the circus are morally sound as per the social requirements mandated at that time.

Eventually the amount of words dwindled down to just the name of the circus that the poster was meant to advertise, or a short caption explaining the image depicted.

Again, the demographic was changing and the circus, as a business, had to recognize that the ever-increasing massive influx of immigrants could not read English, nor were they given the educational tools to acquire English. Furthermore, having simple, large pictures the circus was able to advertise to more people more quickly. Unfortunately, the iconic image of the community lingering in front of a magnificent poster announcing the arrival of one of the most interesting, original, and universal forms of entertainment had become obsolete as America changed its pace to match the reset of the world. **Bw**

Savannah Handerson, originally from St. Augustine, Florida attends New College of Florida in Sarasota. She is in her third year of study seeking a Liberal Arts degree with a concentration in American and British Literature. In her free time, she interns at Sarasota Magazine where she is actively involved in Sarasota's community events and partakes regularly in the intricacies of the publishing world. When not in Sarasota, she spends her time working at the University of North Florida as a student receptionist. Summers here are where she developed her passion for seeking and spreading education through such influential people as Melonie Handerson, her mother. Together, with family like her brother, Zackery Handerson, and her rescued bichon, Todd, she has an unwavering foundation allowing her to take transformative opportunities for which she is entirely grateful. In the future, she hopes to continue expanding her comprehension of the enigmatic entity that is the American circus through further research and future field developments.



Figure 9. Strobridge Lithograph Co., Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey: The Siamese Twins, circa 1930.

Endnotes

1. Paul Stirton, "The American Circus Poster," in *The American Circus*, Edited by Susan Weber, Kenneth Ames, and Matthew Wittmann (Yale University Press, 2012), 110.
2. Pfening, Fred D., III "The Strobridge Lithographing Company, The Ringling Brothers, and Their Circuses," in *Amazing American Circus Poster: The Strobridge Lithographing Company*, Edited by Kristin Spangenberg, Deborah W. Walk (Cincinnati Art Museum, 2011), 37.
3. Ibid., 109.
4. Ibid., 112.
5. Harvey J. Graff, *The Literacy Myth: Cultural Integration and Social Structure in the Nineteenth Century* (Transaction Publishers, 1991). 22.
6. Ibid., 23.
7. Victor E. Neuburg, *Popular Education in Eighteenth Century England*, (Woburn Press, 1971) 22.
8. Neil Harris, *Humbug: The Art of P. T. Barnum*, (University of Chicago Press, 1981) 3.
9. Graff, 23.
10. Ibid., 23-24.
11. Lydia Maria Child, *The Mother's Book* (Carter, Hendee, and Babcock, 1831), 86.
12. It is worth noting that the circus was the target of a series of religious tracts of the late 19th century, with the short booklets such as "Are You Going to the Circus" published by the American Tract Society in 1863 that described the vices that one could witness as the traveling entertainment.
13. Child, 91.
14. Ibid., 27.
15. Ibid., 25-26.
16. Graff, 51.
17. Ibid., 53.
18. David Carlyon, "A Picture is Worth 757 Words: Circus & Culture, Language & Perception" in *Amazing American Circus Poster: The Strobridge Lithographing Company*, Edited by Kristin Spangenberg, Deborah W. Walk, Fred Dahlinger, Leslie M. Wagner, and Janet Davis (Cincinnati Art Museum, 2011), 33.

Other Works Consulted: Goldstrum, J. M. *The Social Context of Education 1808-1870*. Dublin: Irish University Press, 1972. Print. And Stoddart, Helen. *Rings of Desire: Circus History and Representation*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. Print.



Although she primarily performed in small circuit theatres across Northeast America, Miss Emma Lynden drew a significant amount of influence, particularly in advertising, from the circus, which demonstrates the influence that moral values had on the entertainment industry. Her act consisted of a bird presentation and "second-sight" tricks, and in her poster, she is presented as a "Mind Reader and Bird Educator." Here, the reader can plainly see the result of the literacy and education trend in America via the terms "reader" and "educator." The advertisement counters her traditionally "supernatural" act by referring to it as mind "reading." This gives Miss Emma Lynden an appropriate impression, as created by the traditional religious masses, because, despite the fact that she is practicing a traditional dark art, she appears literate and, thusly, meets the requirements of an upstanding American citizen. This impression is further solidified by the fact that she is referred to as a "bird educator," which, again, solidifies her presence among traditional American citizens hoping to be entertained by someone who can impart earned knowledge on an increasingly educated public.

Interestingly, in 1891, Miss Lynden was among the performers who returned from a South American tour with the Frank A. Gardner Circus, as discussed in Steve Gossard's article *The Frank A. Gardner Circus and its Contemporaries* in this issue.



**THE TENTED FIELD AND GRAND PARADE OF
AMERICA'S RACING ASSOCIATION!**
INTERNATIONAL HIPPODROME, MENAGERIE, AND CONGRESS OF NATIONS.

The unique activities of Circus Day altered the daily ritual of a community, which abandoned work and school to enjoy the one day respite. This generic poster, imprinted with an 1875 title, captured the excitement of the tent city being mobbed by excursion train arrivals, all centered around the iconic bandwagon that proudly displayed the quality of the enterprise to the parade viewers.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

Language and the Circus “Getting into the Band Wagon”

by Fred Dahlinger Jr.

Beyond unique parade wagon and painted sideshow banner designs, stirring circus music compositions, elegant wardrobe, exaggerated make-up and functional performance props, an under-appreciated creative aspect of the circus heritage is the use of language. A specialized vernacular, vocabulary and phrases came into use by showmen and in some cases by the general public. It is associated with or about the existence of the circus.

There are well known examples, such as “jumbo” and “hold your horses,” but what about “bean counter” and “hey, Rube”? There is also the famous and flamboyant use of excessive adjectives, poly-syllabic rhyming and creative and imaginative wording abounding in circus advertising. Interested researchers of the recent past watched for initial use, scoured dictionaries of slang and etymology and otherwise sought the

origins of this unique body of verbal and written communication.

The recent development of large digitized archives of textual materials that are quickly searchable has opened up the entire field to new discoveries at a rate than can be dizzying in its diversity. This monograph is the first example of what will hopefully become a wide variety of examples by an entire array of authors, who, to use a variation on the phrase, want to “get into Bandwagon.”

How many times has the word “circus” or “sideshow” been inappropriately applied by citizens, politicians or the media as a name for the chaos associated with political activity? This first monograph relates to the word that gave the CHS journal its name, bandwagon, which came to mean an advocacy, as indicated by a phrase associated with boarding the vehicle.

The year 1793 marked the beginning of an entirely new and different form of entertainment in America, the circus. It consisted of skilled performers in wardrobe, utilizing trained horses and purpose-built properties to present a ground and aerial performance in a ring, all to the accompaniment of music. The greatness of a troupe was for naught if the public was unaware of the presence of the show, as well as specific knowledge of the members and the turns they would soon present amidst them. Their scheduled public presentations were made known by entirely textual advertising in newspapers and posted bills.

Brand and Travel

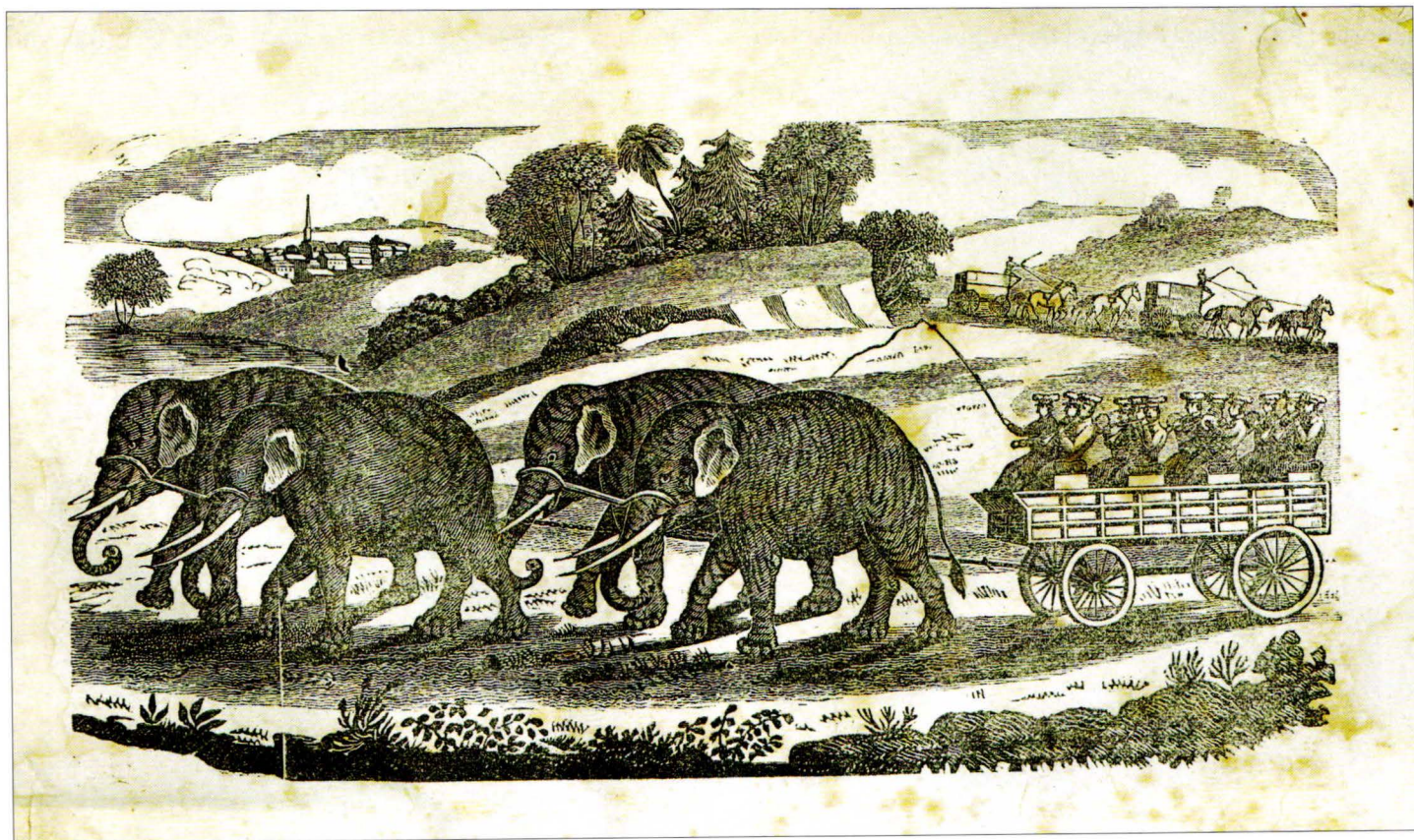
The first recognized traveling show “brand” was established in 1824, when a troupe took on the name of the proprietor and as an adjective used the name of a community to provide a statement of importance and quality: Bancker’s New York Circus. The action gave the troupe a unique, publicly-announced identification, establishing a tradition that remains in use today. Bancker’s was not a tent operation; it was still using a series of temporary wooden and canvas amphitheaters to house it on the route.

The traveling menagerie, established by the definition of three or more species touring together, came into existence in 1813. An argument can be made that itinerant cage

outfits provided an operating model that was subsequently embraced by the circus in 1825 and thereafter, but their innovations didn’t include branding. The owners advertised their aggregations by generic titles such as Museum of Living Animals (1813) and Grand Caravan with Tippoo Sultan (1822), which identified the featured beast, an elephant. In 1826 one menagerie outfit was named for a city of origin, Boston Caravan of Living Animals, but not until 1829 did an animal caravan bear a proprietor’s name, that of Macomber & Co.¹

Simple fixed structures provided housing for ring shows until 1825, when the purchase of a canvas outfit, a pavilion complete with all appurtenances, vehicles and horses to convey it imbued the institution with a traveling character. It may have formerly been the property of a menagerie.

Moving from community to community on a daily basis made the need for identity and the announcement of presence a daily activity of considerable importance. During the next decade the traveling menagerie exploited the advances in printing technology by commissioning large posters incorporating a multitude of graphic images. These grandiose pieces, posted in highly visible places in a community, fired imaginations with their visual appeal, generating anticipation for the arrival of the show caravan. Their methodology was followed by the circus.



The earliest bandwagons were simple express wagons. They were very similar to the baggage wagons that hauled the show pavilion and other properties. The train of vehicles continues in the background of this 1843 Raymond, Weeks & Co. engraving.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

Caravan

The only advance representation of the traveling menagerie was the agent and the bills he brought along, by horseback or perhaps in a carriage. On the appointed day the menagerie train, consisting of wheeled cages, baggage vans, and carriages or omnibuses conveying the staff, arrived in town. Passage through the streets to the lot was accompanied only by the sounds naturally made by the horses, vehicles and their living cargoes, a walking elephant creating the greatest stir if it had not been hidden earlier in the morning. In 1834 six of the menageries, which had musicians to enliven the under canvas zoological displays and simple ring acts, placed their bands into horse-drawn vehicles to announce the arrival of the troupes into communities. The musical attention-getter rolled at the head of the march through the city, setting the pattern for what was to follow.

A single circus, perhaps two, embraced the lead music wagon practice in 1835, the first action taken to convert the simple passage of the wheeled and horse-powered show apparatus into a rolling demonstration of glitter and grandeur. The wagon carrying the band was followed by the performers on horseback or in wheeled conveyances and trailed by the baggage wagons. It was the basis of the spectacle that developed from the 1840s through the 1870s into the daily circus street parade. The traveling circus business not only absorbed the methodologies of the menageries, by the 1850s

the entire beast industry was infused into the ring shows and one consolidated business was the result.

Rolling Icon

Subsequent to the imagination-fueling presence of the great posters, the street demonstration became the principal investment in publicity financed by the circus proprietor. It advocated via visual and audio artistry for residents to patronize his circus. For rational reasons, the lead feature of the cavalcade, the vehicle conveying the show musicians, came to represent the identity of the circus; in particular, it became a symbol of the quality of the show inside the pavilion. The impresario who spent a small fortune on the free demonstration in the street surely spent even more for the entertainment for which a ticket had to be purchased.

The vehicle at the head of the parade, along with aspects of the pavilion, another costly purchase, became the two non-performer topics aggrandized in all forms of post-Jacksonian era circus advertising. Unlike the pavilion housing the performance of multiple-hours duration, the specially created wagon for the band served very briefly, to make a temporary street display and to carry troupe members through the early dawn to the next engagement.

Yet, the special conveyance was usually described in phrasing like this for the *Roman Chariot*, or, *Imperial State Carriage and Throne* of the 1846 Van Amburgh & Co.'s lead vehicle: "The splendor and magnitude of this Gorgeous and



MR. VAN AMBURGH'S PUBLIC ENTRY INTO LONDON. AT HYDE PARK CORNER.

In the 1840s, in both the U. S. and Great Britain, the arrival of a great troupe was signaled by the public passage of the band on a wagon through the principal streets of the city. Initially they were often portrayed with famous buildings as a backdrop, thereby associating the show with community icons.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

Colossal Carriage baffles description.” Three full pages of a specially printed booklet were devoted to illustrating and word-picturing the indescribable attraction of the wagon and applied decorative elements, band, wardrobe, team, harness, and trappings. These official show-issued advertising documents were created solely and specifically for public consumption. Writers employed aggrandizing vocabulary, as well as comparisons to royal or heroic vehicles of the past when describing one of the show’s most costly investments.

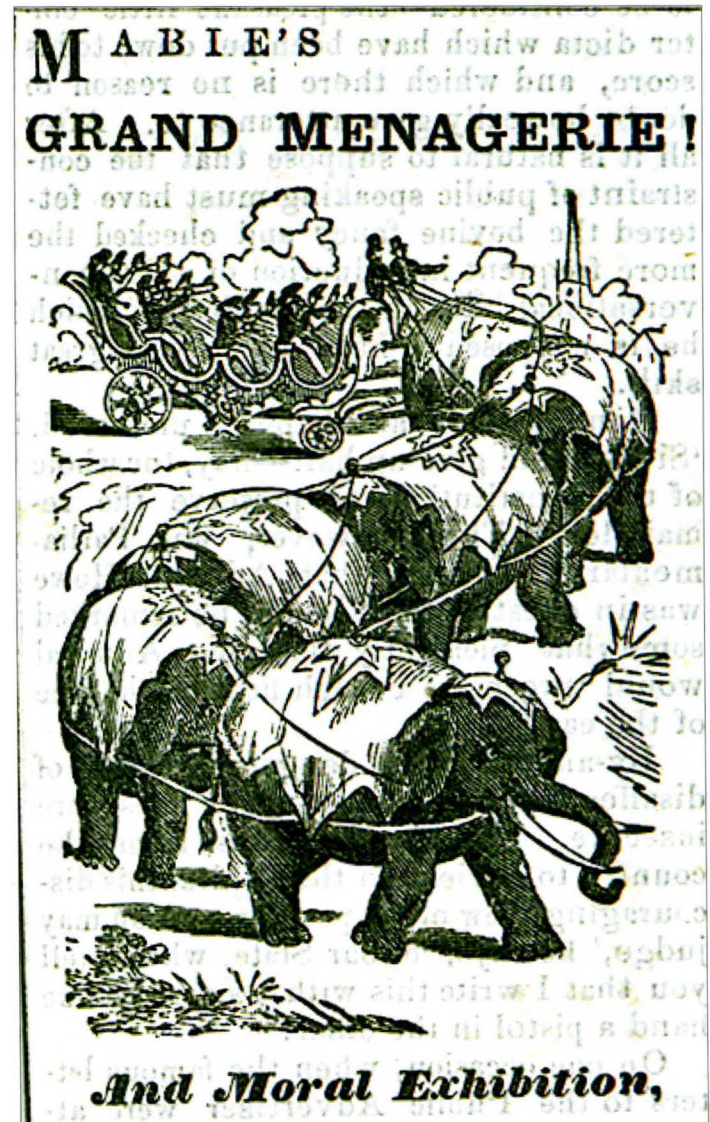
Starting in 1834, when they were introduced on traveling menageries, itinerant showmen utilized a number of different names for what became known as the “band wagon,” and later the compound “bandwagon.” Through 1837 these included words derived from the type of vehicle, such as omnibus, carriage, and barouche, as well as the simple and straight forward “music carriage.”²² The designation of a vehicle’s specific purpose in the name applied to it, to present the music or convey the band, indicates that specialized wagons were already in use. When they became even more numerous the practice of assigning specific numbers was commenced, being documented by 1839.

Band Wagon in Print

It can be assumed that there was show lot slang that predated similar word use in journalism, autobiographies, etc. Some circus vernacular was presumably transferred to local journalists by exposure to showmen, notably via advance agents or others with whom they came into periodic or routine contact. The earliest known use in print of “band wagon” is the mention of such a vehicle in conjunction with the Mabie brothers circus of Delavan, Wisconsin. It was found in the December 22, 1848 (Brattleboro) *Vermont Phoenix*, which credited the *Beloit (Wisconsin) Journal* of November 23, 1848. The entry related to the group of six elk that had gone through the community, en route to the circus winter quarters, where they were to be trained, “for the purpose of drawing the band wagon of the Circus establishment owned by these gentlemen.” No subsequent report of a Mabie band vehicle before 1855 has been discovered, with the one furnished that year by Bruce of Cincinnati illustrated thereafter in a newspaper ad engraving.

The traveling shows had come to Wisconsin only a few years before, 1843, and the Beloit newspaper’s inclusion of the term suggests how quickly show vernacular may have gone into journalistic use. Shows had a natural appeal for paper scribes because they brought variation to the usual reporting routine. It should be noted that it was common for the circus world to have two names for performers, featured animals and even apparatus: the Antonio Bros. family name was actually Migasi; an elephant advertised as Columbus and Rajah was directed by his handler under the name Charlie; and the gilt carving-encrusted parade wagon from the Fielding Bros. shop was a “band wagon” to the show folks.

The newly-discovered Mabie reference pre-dates the widely-cited first use of “band wagon,” which appeared in the initial 1855 edition of P. T. Barnum’s autobiography. The great showman’s career had commenced in 1835 and fast forwarded in 1836 when his mercantile background enabled him to claim the combined positions of secretary, treasurer and ticket seller with Aaron Turner’s Old Columbian Circus. After concluding his contract with Turner on October 30, Barnum organized an under canvas variety show featuring clown Joe Pentland and having several musicians, all conveyed on wagons. In early December 1836, Barnum purchased two wagons formerly with the Turner side show and unidentified other vehicles in about September from Pentland, or perhaps a recent partner named Z. Graves. Whatever the details, at an unknown date between



The Mabie brothers of Delavan, Wisconsin, operated a traveling menagerie that had elements of a circus, euphemistically termed a “Moral Exhibition.” One of their 1850s bandwagons resembled the style that was used on circus and later town bandwagons. Circus World Museum



THE MAGNIFICENT GOLDEN CHARIOT OF HOWES' & CO.'S UNITED STATES CIRCUS.

The largest and most splendid Equestrian Establishment in the world, comprising 240 Men, Horses, Children and Ponies, will exhibit at

1848

DIMENSIONS OF THE ABOVE CHARIOT. LENGTH 25 FEET 6 INCHES. HEIGHT 20 FEET. DRAWN BY 20 CREAM COLORED HORSES.

While some showmen invested little in a music carriage, others like Howes & Co. splurged and commissioned John Stephenson of New York to turn out fantastic chariots with elaborate and gilded ornamentation. Their designs were derived from the classic revival styles of the period.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

August 1837 and March 1838 Barnum wrote: "At Vicksburg we sold all our land-conveyances, excepting four horses and the 'band wagon'."³

The challenge of interpreting the Barnum use of "band wagon" is whether the term was heard by him in 1836-1838, or if he'd acquired it in his subsequent two decades of activities before the publication of the book. During that time he was thoroughly exposed to museum operations and personality promotional tours, and more than likely to many other forms of shows including other circuses.

Another challenge is the bandwagon Barnum referenced. Menageries had first introduced the concept in 1834 and but a single circus, or possibly two, had one in 1835. The vehicles then in use were of the express wagon type that could have served to haul baggage on any day, once the seat planks were removed from between the vehicle sidewalls.

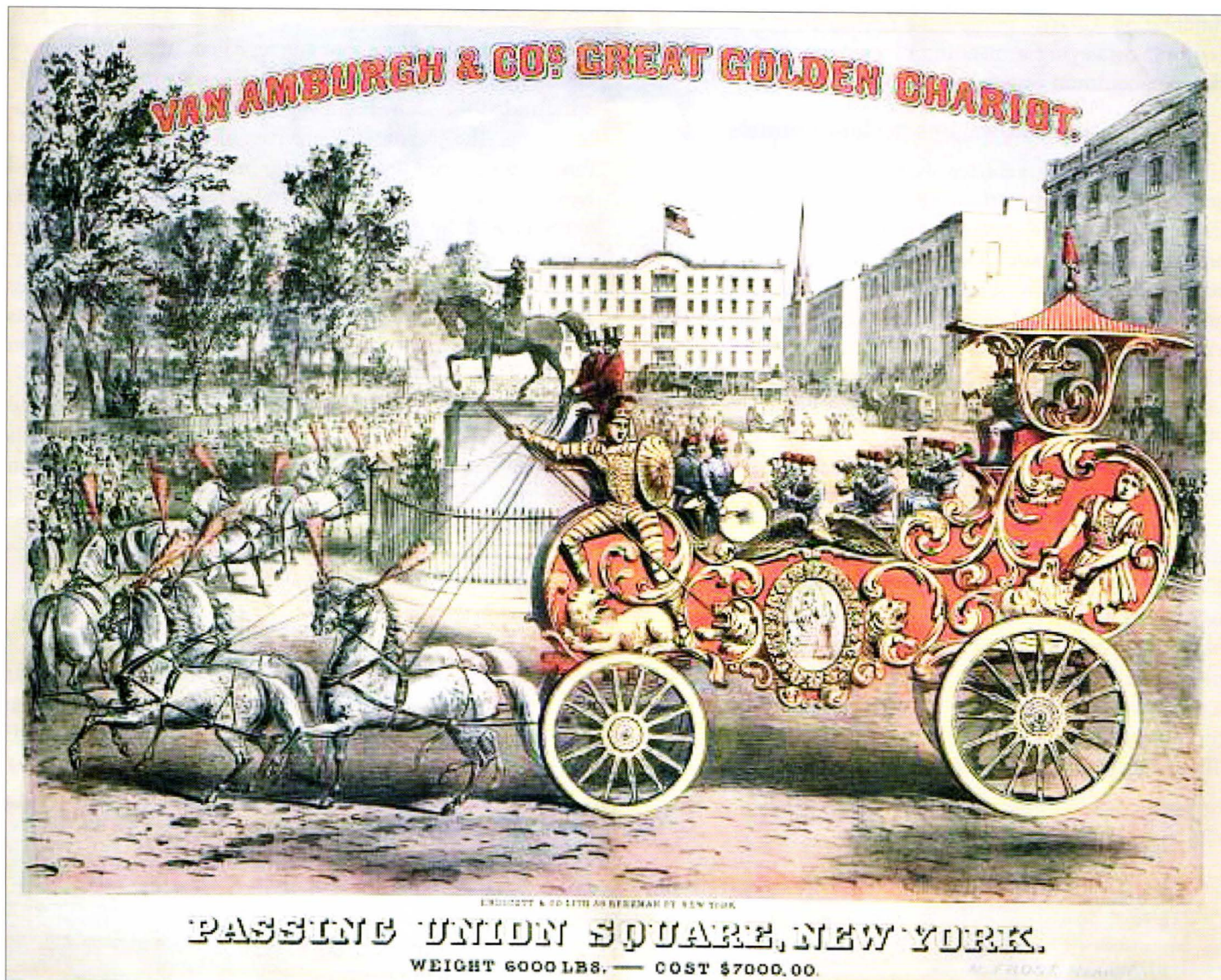
Aaron Turner was hardly a spendthrift or innovator and there is no specific record of the showman owning a bandwagon in 1836. Indeed, Stuart Thayer was unable to establish that he owned one until 1846. Further, Turner's use of such a vehicle in 1849 was unconventional. One eye witness recalled that he made no parade, simply having a four horse team pull the small bandwagon up to the hotel and limiting the six musicians to playing a single tune.⁴ We would there-

fore conclude that it was Barnum who had taken one of the baggage wagons conveying his variety show and assigned to it the task of conveying his musicians. How it was specialized to deserve the name band wagon, other than by use as such, remains a mystery.

In retrospect, the principal value of Barnum's use of "band wagon" is the verification that it provides for common use when he published his memoir in 1855. Barnum wasn't the only showman to use the vernacular in the 1850s. "Band wagon" was the form employed in the contract when Hiram Orton sold his circus to others in 1857.⁵ Further examples can be cited in other circus auction and sales documents until the term went into general public usage via show advertising materials.

The Rough and Ready Red Herring

It is completely by accident that the earliest known use of "band wagon" in print, in the Beloit newspaper, took place in the presidential election year of 1848. Zachary Taylor was running on the Whig ticket for office and had gained the nickname "Rough and Ready" for his military campaigns in the war with Mexico. Dan Rice proceeded to sing a song titled "Rough and Ready, or the Campaign of 1846." Taylor visited Rice after a show in New Orleans. David Carlyon's



Van Amburgh & Co's lead parade vehicle, constructed by the Fielding Bros. of New York for the season of 1868, exemplified the grandeur of the circus chariot.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

authoritative *Dan Rice, The Most Famous Man You've Never Heard Of*, suggests that the stories that the humorist created after their meeting resulted in the ultimate legend that Taylor had first gotten "on the bandwagon" with the Rice show.⁶ Carlyon's searching through nineteenth century resources for the story failed to yield any relevant references. Discovery of the origin of the legend awaits more research.

Band Chariot

Starting again in 1843, after a several year hiatus, band-wagons were brought back into featured use and identified by "music car" and other terms. The one name that stood out in frequency of use was "chariot." It was derived from the neo-classical Greek Revival movement then driving American culture, which also inspired the decorative motif applied to the bandwagons starting in 1846. This followed the Roman Classicism period, the residual effects of which

also proved influential on the American circus.

By the late 1850s the purpose-specific term "band chariot" went into use, because other styles of parade vehicles were then being added to the march. The compound word "bandchariot" eventually went into use. The term designated a decorated vehicle in which the feet of at least some of the bandsmen rested on the floorboards when they were seated in a normal riding and playing position.

A search of the Barnum and Barnum & London route books from 1873 to 1885 failed to yield a single example of the use of band wagon or bandwagon. The route books, written by people other than Barnum himself, employed "band chariot," starting in 1883. There is another single use of it in 1886. A Forepaugh route book invoked it in 1883, but also used other terms. We would conclude that bandwagon wasn't a really commonly used circus term at the time, in print, otherwise it would be seen everywhere in circus doc-

umentation. Chariot remained a favored term into the 20th century, conveying a meaning of grandeur that surpassed that of a common wagon.

Circus Bandwagons in Communities

Circus parade vehicles were sometimes pressed into service to celebrate patriotic events, especially on Independence Day, and also served in Grand Army of the Republic and other civic parades. On the days when he staged a press reception before the season opener Barnum show, press agent Tody Hamilton used a bandwagon to convey reporters from the Bridgeport train depot to the winter quarters. Usually the press corps was well fortified with readily-available libations for the brisk, early spring trip on the gilded chariot.

There were also occasions when circus-owned vehicles were pressed into political service. Barnum may have been a party to such use in the Bridgeport area. In one instance, when he was nominated for state senator in 1880, he wanted to use the show's calliope to advance his candidacy. Barnum was one of the few 19th century showmen willing to espouse positions on topics of national interest. Most traveling showmen feared that such outspokenness and advocacy would have a detrimental effect upon ticket buyers; those embracing opposite views would stay away, decreasing revenues. The circus identity was tied to that of the proprietor.

Several connections can be established between circus bandwagons and those that conveyed community bands. A circus that rolled into Mound City, Kansas in 1865 reportedly traded the show bandwagon for a bill due for animal boarding. The wagon still survives in the community. The fancy bandchariot of the Giles Pullman circus was acquired by the Monroe, Georgia band following the auction of the show chattel in 1886 and presumably lived out its days there.

Some wagon shops furnished vehicles to both circuses and town bands. Havekotte of Cincinnati, a builder of circus wagons in the 1880s, reportedly constructed a bandwagon for the Paddy's Run Cornet Band of Shandon, Ohio in 1887. Drennen & Phares of Warren, Ohio, a local carriage and wagon builder, identified their conveyance for musicians as a "band wagon" in an expansive engraving of their operation in an 1874 Trumbull County atlas. It was easily the equal of many circus-owned bandchariots.

Community Bandwagons

During the mid-19th century era there were a multitude of community-based bands in the United States. Many of the local groups subsequently acquired bandwagons that conveyed them in civic, fraternal, and other parades. The Civil War, with its marching bands leading contingents of soldiers, fueled such efforts, but it was a time to take the feet



Drennen & Goist of Warren, Ohio created this outstanding bandwagon for a community group by 1874. The elegant decorative scheme was inspired by circus bandchariots of the period.

Circus World Museum, Fred D. Pfening III gift

off the ground and simply ride and play. One band wagon was mentioned in an 1865 Montana account, as part of a July 4 procession. Some of these were very similar, nearly identical, to some circus parade vehicles.

Insights on the bands of the period can be garnered from the book by Margaret Hindle Hazen and Robert M. Hazen, *The Music Men, An Illustrated History of Brass Bands In America, 1800-1920*. The Hazens cite Rochester, Indiana as having both Democratic and Union bands, each with their own bandwagon in the 1860s. Notably, the Union bandwagon was quite tall, requiring the use of a ladder to board it. One can imagine how such action might have inspired the familiar phrase. Other than to note the existence of the bandwagon-related phrase the Hazens made no attempt to determine the origin of it.

Commercial enterprises also enlisted the use of bands to advertise their products. One tertiary source reports that soap maker Benjamin T. Babbitt (1809-1889) popularized the phrase by using musicians on street cars. There were no such conveyances that early and we assume the writer meant either a horse-drawn omnibus on spoke wheels, or a horse car rolling along on tracks embedded in the street. Babbitt did use commercial box wagons, adorned with painted title boards and scenes to advertise his wares.

It seems possible that the proliferation of bandwagons outside the world of the circus had an impact on the general public's knowledge of such vehicles. While the fancy gilded and painted chariots of the traveling shows were the most flamboyant of the genre, those chariots were not as commonly seen as the local bandwagons, which were of a more utilitarian and less elegant construction.

Bandwagon: Synonym for Advocacy

Before the phrase that sparked this article went into common use, an opposite action phrase was coined and employed. It is the first that employs the compound word "bandwagon" as a synonym for political agenda advocacy. The earliest example uncovered dates to 1880: "This political dyspeptic [politician]; a hysterical man who was with us in sunshine and under a band wagon in the storm..."⁷ A similar use followed a year later. "There are papers in this locality, noted for being with the Republican party in the sunshine and 'under the band wagon in the storm,' that might profit by this from the Indianapolis Journal..."⁸

The Phrase Appears

Despite attempts to find an origin of the general "get/climb on the bandwagon" phrase within the world of the circus, we have failed to do so. Searching through the usual sources of information suggests a largely political origin, but with distant circus roots.

The use also signifies a change in meaning, from the two-word "band wagon" to the compound "bandwagon."

The former is the vehicle of circus origin, whereas the latter is the representation of a compelling force, a movement, a way of thinking. It is for that reason that the phrase that invokes the compound word is thought by this writer to have a political heritage.

The earliest entry found via a connected word search through a large newspaper database for get+band+wagon was discovered in a June 8, 1884 issue of the *St. Paul* (MN) *Daily Globe*, which carried a report from a Chicago newspaper. It stated: "The [Chicago?] *Times* headed Senator Sabin's speech announcing that Minnesota had concluded to be solid for Blaine, 'getting into the band wagon.'"⁹

James G. Blaine (1830-1893) was a leading member of the Republican Party in the late 19th century and the standard bearer for the party as the 1884 nominee for president. Dwight M. Sabin (1843-1902) was another Republican, a senator from Stillwater, Minnesota. Placement at the head of an article concerning a controversial pre-election sentiment, in a major metropolitan area newspaper, was surely something that would be remembered, like a catchy election slogan or jingle.

Life contributed somewhat to the literature by publishing a half-page engraving in the October 23, 1884 issue.¹⁰ It portrayed "Ledger de Blaine", "The Great Magnetic Phenomenon" ensconced in a covered wagon that was part of a circus parade-like entourage. On the wagon canvas was the modified slogan "The Biggest Show on Earth." In this instance, there was no band on the wagon; they were marching immediately ahead of it. Published analyses of the election commonly make use of the phrase "Blaine bandwagon."

American political activity frequently attracted the attention of the British journal *Puck*, which summarized the goings-on across the Atlantic in various cartoons. Innumerable tertiary sources online report that an 1884 *Puck* cartoon portrayed President Chester A. Arthur (1829-1886) driving a wagon conveying a number of other candidates vying for the presidency. Arthur, elevated to the presidency by the assassination and death of Garfield in September 1881, suffered from ill health and made only a half-hearted attempt to gain his party's nomination at the Republican convention on June 3-6, 1884. A number of ambitious politicians sought to replace him, with James G. Blaine receiving his party's nomination. He ultimately lost the race to Grover Cleveland. Despite the numerous online references to the cartoon, three searches of the journal in the year indicated failed to reveal any presence of the piece.¹¹

A search has revealed but one wagon reference in association with Arthur in 1884. Under a dateline of June 2, 1884, it was reported that the Indiana delegation to the Republican convention arrived aboard a "soap wagon." Decorating the sides were banners boosting Arthur and vice presidential candidate S. W. Dorsey, along with a proclamation: "Platform, Cleanliness is Next to Godliness. Use Spriggins's

German Laundry Soap.” Portraits of Arthur, portrayed first as Collector of the Port of New York and after becoming President were said to represent the before and after use of soap.¹² In a similar vein, the October 23, 1884 portrayal of the Blaine entourage terminated with a wagon with corner banners reading “Soap” and “Lye.”

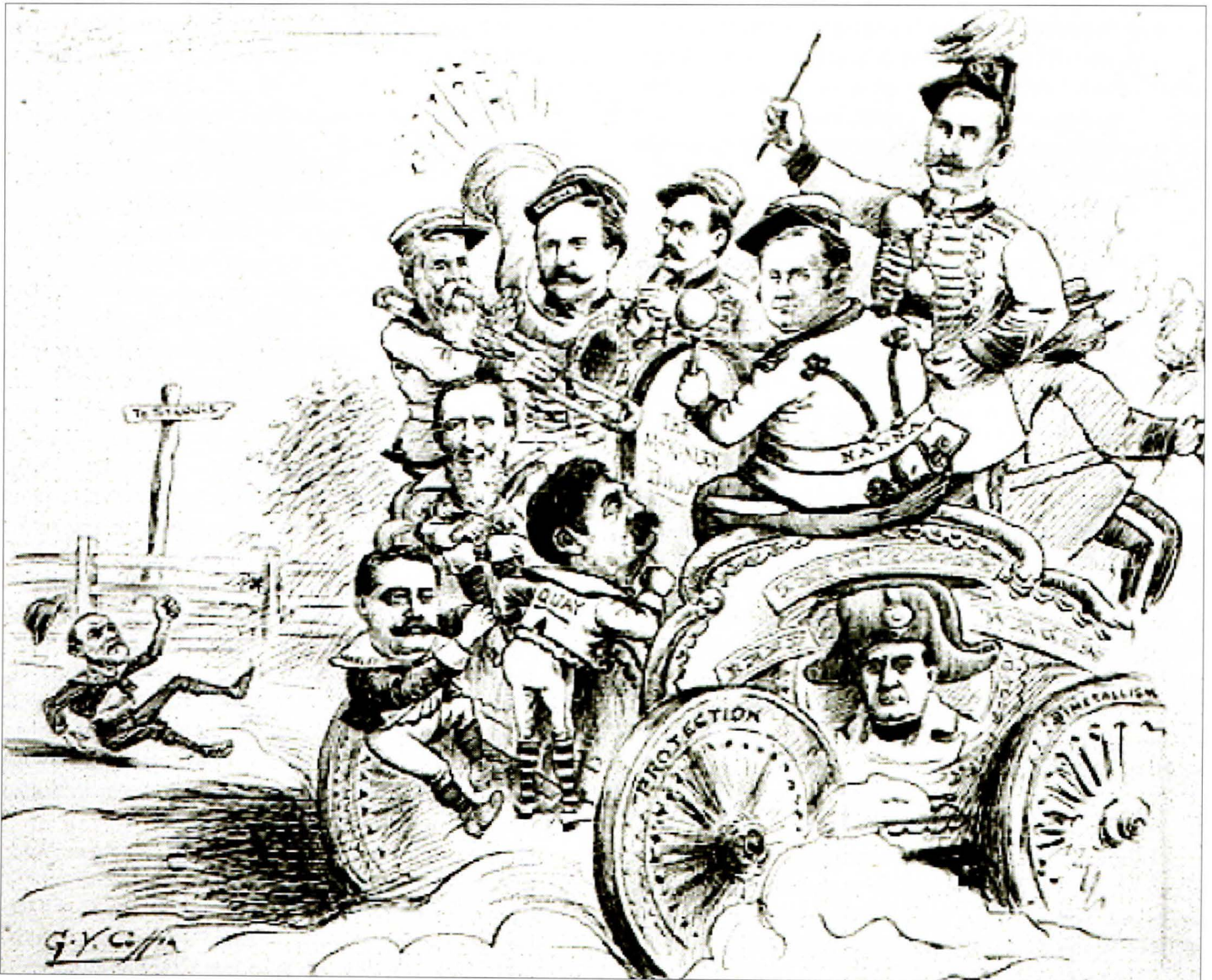
The *New Ulm* (MN) *Weekly Review* of February 25, 1885, quoting an undated *Sleepy Eye Herald*, carried this statement in regard to political activity: “There are a good many who are anxious to be in the procession just now, and they want to get into the band wagon too.” This did not relate to a vehicle in a procession, but broadening Democratic club activity beyond the local activists.

The sentence “The Tories will climb on the bandwagon that has been created by the people with whom they pretend to disagree” is found in 1885 Canadian Parliament House of Commons Debate coverage. American culture has always

had a profound influence north of the border, whose residents also read *Puck*.

The large newspaper database was also searched for climb+band+wagon. Nothing was found until 1889, when seven uses occurred in the next two years. They included: “. . . mere students, who wouldn’t know how to climb up on a band wagon” in the *St. Paul* (MN) *Daily Globe*, February 9, 1889. Variations in the specific use of the involved verb and preposition can also be cited. “They still climb into the [William Jennings] Bryan band wagon” is in the *Palestine* (TX) *Daily Herald* of June 29, 1906.

The political symbolism was picked up by cartoonist George Yost Coffin (1850-1896) in a sketch portraying politicians attempting to board a bandwagon for William McKinley, who had gained the Republican nomination for president at St. Louis in mid-June 1896. His 1896 piece titled “Getting on to the band wagon” portrayed McKinley in a



“Getting into the bandwagon” had a deliberate political implication. Cartoonist George Yost Coffin’s 1896 piece captured the essence of supporters getting on the bandwagon for William McKinley’s presidential nomination. Author’s collection

bas relief portrait affixed to the side of the vehicle, giving him the appearance of Napoleon, as was frequently done at the time. The wagon rolled along on wheels of McKinley principles labeled "Protection," via tariffs, and "Bimetallism," in support of the gold standard for money. Mark Hanna and Senator Matthew Quay, along with caricatures of six more McKinley associates or supporters rode the vehicle. While rumbling along it had knocked a bearded figure off his feet; exactly who it was intended to represent is unclear, but it was likely one of the vanquished competitors for the nomination. Coffin's presentation bears no substantial resemblance to a circus parade feature. Some sources credit this image to the pages of *Puck*, but the original place of publication remains to be determined.

Summary

A circus bandwagon carried musicians, in special wardrobe, all drawn by the show's fanciest team of horses, or sometimes elephants, camels or dromedaries. It advocated for the circus by making the best presentation possible, giving a special meaning to the name of the show that had caused it to roll through the streets. The circus action was based on the premise that the show making the finest display in the streets would be rewarded with greater sales at the ticket wagon.

Showmen in the 1830s employed public names for band conveyances that were type-of-vehicle or purpose-based, such as "omnibus" and "music carriage." These were superseded in the mid-1840s by "chariot," which arose from Greek and Roman Revival cultural movements. In the late 1850s it became the purpose-specific "band chariot."

"Band wagon" was known and in infrequent journalism use by the mid-19th century. It was occasionally found in internal show documentation, where an economy of words was common. "Band wagon" was not the phrase most frequently used in circus advertising or show-issued publications until the twentieth century was approaching.

In the 1880s the phrase "band wagon" was more commonly found in public use owing to the existence of community bandwagons, which served to convey local bands in parade.

The mid-1880s popularized phrase associated with boarding a wagon to support a political advocacy or candidate can trace an origin to circus branding and to the circus use of the bandwagon as an icon of the presence of the show. However, the specific origination and application of the phrase, and variations thereon, had nothing to do with bona fide circus activity. It is an example of how a very special circus event, the passing of an elegant chariot through the streets, had been embraced, and changed, to become part of general American culture. **Bw**

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Endnotes

1. See Stuart Thayer, "A History of the Traveling Menagerie in America," *Bandwagon*, 35, 5 (Sep.-Oct. 1991), 64-71.
2. Unpublished notes, Stuart Thayer papers, John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art.
3. P. T. Barnum, *The Life of P. T. Barnum*, (New York: Redfield, 1855), 205. Pages 177-207 provide context for Barnum's initial traveling show experience.
4. Geo[rge] S. Cole, "Circus Recollections," *Billboard*, August 13, 1904, 17.
5. Earl Chapin May Papers, CWM.
6. David Carlyon. *Dan Rice, The Most Famous Man You've Never Heard Of* (pages 77-78).
7. *Omaha Daily Bee*, May 11, 1880.
8. The (Chicago) *Daily Inter Ocean*, May 20, 1881. The author is indebted to Maureen Brunsdale and Mark Schmitt in Special Collections, Milner Library, Illinois State University, for bringing forth this hitherto unknown variation.
9. "Chronicling America," Library of Congress website, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.
10. *Life* magazine October 23, 1884 issue (pages 231-233).
11. Separate searches were conducted by Maureen Brunsdale, Matthew Wittman and the author.
12. "The Convention," *Life*, June 12, 1884, 333. Spriggins was not a soap manufacturer, but a reference to a humorous literary figure.



Figure 1. Mr. Ducrow as the Courier of St. Petersburg.

RIDING TWO HORSES AT ONCE

Circus Image Appropriation for Political Purpose

by Jason P. Martin, images from the Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

“Every very demonstrative exhibition, from a political row to a religious revival, is now called a circus.” These telling words were published in the *Galveston Daily News*, a Texas newspaper, on May 16, 1885. At first, politics and circuses may appear to be very different; but a closer look reveals similarities. Like the circus, the political stage has a

large cast, extravagant showmanship, and a seemingly-endless supply of people whose actions consist, either literally or figuratively, of jumping through hoops, walking a tight-rope, juggling, or clowning around.

As the above quote shows, by the late-nineteenth century, the circus had long since been established as a staple of

entertainment; and, ever since its inception, the equestrian show was an integral act of any circus. John S. Clarke, the author of *Circus Parade*, succinctly summed up the importance of the horse to the circus, writing: "The circus began with the horse, and the horse is still the pivot of its existence. No horses, no circus."¹

The equestrian act as performance entertainment pre-dates the circus. The critical elements of an early equestrian show were little more than a handful of horses, a few riders to perform tricks while on horseback, and a large enough space to perform and hold an audience. However, it was not until equestrian acts added aerial performances to their show that one can first speak of the true birth of the circus.²

The person credited with creating this entertainment combination was Philip Astley, circa 1770. Astley was the first proprietor of one of the true epicenters of British entertainment in the late-Georgian and Victorian eras, Astley's Amphitheatre [Figure 2]; and it is not a coincidence that he was first known for his own equestrian prowess. Astley has sometimes been given the epithet "father of the modern circus," and his importance in the annals of circus history cannot be overstated.³ Likewise, the trick rider and horse are equally integral to the circus.

The exact origin of riding two or more horses concurrently is unknown, although attribution is usually credited to Ancient Rome; and thus the act is often referred to as "Roman Riding." However, in relation to the circus, the specific acrobatic feat of maintaining control of multiple horses while standing atop their backs was made famous by performers at Astley's Amphitheatre in London. Although this sort of trick riding undoubtedly achieved widespread fame with Astley and his ilk in Britain, it must be stated that other equestrian riders preceded him in this kind of performance. Jacob Bates [Figure 3] is documented as having toured his equestrian trick riding show throughout Europe as early as 1766.⁴ Bates was greatly admired for his trick riding abilities in the mid-to-late eighteenth century, and performed for both American and European audiences, including a large number of continental European leaders, but has now largely been eclipsed by Astley.⁵

Circa mid-1820s,⁶ the act of riding two horses at once was taken to further heights with the invention of the "Courier of St. Petersburg," [Figures 1 & 4] by Andrew Ducrow. Ducrow was the chief performer and, ultimately, the successor to Astley's circus empire until Ducrow's untimely death in 1842 at the age of 49. Alternately known as "The Hungarian Post," *Le Postillon de Longjumeau*, "The Royal Post," and various other titles, Ducrow's "Courier of St. Petersburg," greatly increased the difficulty and spectacle by involving more horses. The "Courier Act," as it came to be called, belongs to the tradition of Scenic Riding, also referred to as Equestrian Melodrama, in which a usually mythical or historical narrative is played out on horseback.⁷ In the Courier

Figure 2. Unknown printer, Playbill for Astley's Royal Amphitheatre, September 28, 1840.

Act, a rider begins by standing on a single horse, then a second horse is added, on which the rider places one of his feet, so that he is standing with one foot on each animal's back. Shortly after this, another horse, bearing the flag of a country a courier would have seen on the way to St. Petersburg is introduced by running between the rider's legs, allowing the rider to grab the horse's long-line reins and gain the animal's control. This same action is repeated multiple times.⁸ The daring act was an immediate hit, and was adopted by many later equestrian riders. In his 1868 book, *Recollections and Wanderings of Paul Bedford: Facts, Not Fancies*, Bedford



Figure 3. G.P. Nusbiegel, Jacob Bates, the famous English horse rider, 1766.

described his personal experience of seeing the act as “a never to-be-forgotten event.”⁹ To this day, a variation of it continues to be included in many modern circuses.¹⁰

The popularity of the circus in general, Andrew Ducrow, and the well-known “Courier of St. Petersburg” act specifically, solidify the notion that a nineteenth-century audience would undoubtedly have made an immediate correlation with the image of a man riding two horses with that of the circus.¹¹ Indeed, on September 29, 1866, a short write-up in the weekly-published British magazine *Fun*, pointed out the syntactical error of the *Court Circular*’s announcement that, “The Queen, accompanied by Princess Christian, rode on ponies yesterday morning, in the neighbourhood of the Castle” with just such a direct link. The author explains:

The actual fact being that the Royal lady rode on a pony, and not, as stated, on ponies...It is lamentable that the state of our language at Court should cause

a public misstatement of so important a fact, and should lead credulous persons into the error of supposing either that Her Majesty performs the “Courier of St. Petersburg,” or that her morning rides are such prolonged and arduous affairs that she requires a change of ponies on the road.¹²

This humorous example provides proof that there would have been an immediate connection between the riding of multiple horses with that of the circus, and specifically the Courier Act, for a British audience during this period. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the imagery of this equestrian performance was appropriated in both Britain and the United States, at least as early as the second half of the century, for the purpose of biting political commentary.

On November 2, 1856, a short article entitled “Riding Two Horses at Once” was printed in the *Californian Marysville Daily Herald*:

We once visited a peregrinating circus, and among the feats undertaken, was that of riding two horses at once, a foot of the showman being placed on the back of each. The thing went off very well for the first round or so, but the horses, from some cause or other, began to separate, and finally got so far apart that the rider, no longer able to span the space between them, came down flat on his seat to the ground. The crowd was greatly amused at the result, but the rider was no less chagrined. Precisely like the circusman are those politicians, who like him, are trying to please everybody, by riding the freesoil and pro-slavery nags at the same time, but they will soon find themselves let down flat between, while the two parties will move on without them. They will receive, for their pains, what they richly merit - the derision of all spectators. They are sure to lose precisely what they are aiming after, to wit, popularity. They will be utterly despised by both parties. The day for political duplicity is past. The roll is being called. Men must take sides. No man can serve two masters. Let every one [sic] declare for his principles, whatever they are. Better that a man should be positively wrong, than not to be a man at all.¹³

Using an easily relatable description, the unknown author equates the politics of trying to placate those in favor of slavery while simultaneously courting anti-slavery constituents with that of a circus equestrian failing to ride two horses at the same time. The intended moral is clear: those who try to serve more than one master will, inevitably, receive their comeuppance. Although this quote provides an American example, the comparison of politician and circus equestrian was used not only in the United States. Similar examples can be found in the context of British politics as well.

One such instance can be found in the pages of one of Britain's great satirical publications, *Punch*. The British illustrator John Tenniel, best known for his illustrations of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, was one of the principal political cartoonists of *Punch* magazine for over fifty years. In 1853, accompanying a short satirical poem, Tenniel brilliantly lampooned the then-current British Prime Minister, and 4th Earl of Aberdeen, George Hamilton-Gordon, in an image called "The Unpopular Act of the Courier of St. Petersburg."¹⁴ Tenniel's satire was brought on by the British public's perception of defeat at the first battle of the Crimean War at Oltenita.¹⁵ In the print, Tenniel makes a humorous visual comparison between Lord Aberdeen's mishandling of foreign affairs between Britain and Turkey, Russia, and Austria – the latter three shown as unruly horses – with an unsuccessful attempt at Ducrow's Courier Act.

In the image the Prime Minister is shown in full equestrian regalia, including knee-high riding boots, a coat with tails, a brimmed top hat, and a riding crop, standing on the backs of two horses, one of which is shown to be sporting a British Union Jack flag. The British horse appears to be relatively calm in comparison to his equine companions. In the audience, a young Queen Victoria and Mr. Punch, identifiable by his large nose and, as is the case here, often depicted as a hand puppet, can be seen watching the spectacle.

Another visual example of equating politics with the riding of two horses at once can be found in one of the political illustrations in *Summersgill's Election Sketches*.

The image in question [Figure 5] is the tenth in the series, and features one central bearded figure, with a man standing on each his shoulder, straddling two horses while two more simultaneously pass between his legs. All three men are unidentified, but wear identical circus-performer costumes, consisting of dark-colored, sleeveless shirts, short pants, and light-colored tights. The men on top of the main character's shoulders—one featuring a beard, the other with long sideburns—support each other by holding hands, while also holding between them a large banner with the word "Victory" printed on it. All four horses wear bridle accessories that identify each animal as a metaphor for constitution, education, reform, and free trade, respectively.

The print appropriates the image of a circus equestrian performance, similar to Ducrow's Courier Act, for the purpose of political metaphor. Although it is possible that the composition may have been directly derived from a circus poster or advertisement of the time, no contemporary examples of this exact composition have been confirmed. If the image were derived from a circus advertisement, it



Figure 4. Unknown artist, Portion of an advertisement for an equestrian performance of 'The Fleetest Horses', circa 1820.

would explain why the bodies seem so stylistically different and isolated from the realistically-rendered portraits. However, it seems more likely that, due to the inclusion of two performers on top of the main character's shoulders, in addition to the Courier Act similarities, the artist is attempting to show a combination of two, or more, circus equestrian acts at once.

In addition to the Courier Act, the print simultaneously suggests The Reverse Pyramid circus equestrian act. Stuart Thayer, a distinguished historian of American circuses, wrote: "Yet another multi-horse presentation was pyramid riding. In this several men formed a pyramid on two or three horses, usually placing an apprentice or two at the top."¹⁶ In the case of The Reverse Pyramid, the act features a single performer on horseback, holding two or more fellow performers on his shoulders in order to form the shape of an upside-down pyramid.

It is true that the figures of the horses, and the bodies of the men, do appear to be more uniformly designed in relation to the awkward appearance of the human figures' heads. However, the surreal appearance resulting from the placement of a realistic portrait on a cartoon body, often-times disproportionate, has a long history in satirical prints, and could be one plausible explanation as to why the portraits appear to have been placed on a pre-designed, cookie-cutter image. Using existing portraits in order that the audience immediately recognized who was being depicted would have required that the bodies were drawn in correlation to the direction of the existing portrait, but would have saved the artists from having to render a realistic portrait themselves.

It is also interesting to note that the names identifying those depicted in this image have not been included. The artist's decision to leave them out suggests that these would have been well-known men, readily identifiable in their day by their facial features. Based on their implied notoriety, the inclusion of a "Victory" banner, and the image being part of a print series identified as "Election" sketches, it would be logical that the portraits are those of politicians.

Unfortunately, the *Summersgill's Election Sketches* are shrouded in mystery. Little to nothing is known about who created them, other than the cursive initials "JFM" in the bottom right corner, or even by which publication they were published. The Ringling's Tibbals European Collection appears to be the only documented extant copy; but these, too, are an incomplete set.¹⁷ As with many political cartoons of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the figures depicted, and the issues being discussed, are not well-known to modern audiences. Now completely obscured by time, these aspects would undoubtedly have been well known to their contemporary audience, a fact made clear by the artist's deliberate decision not to include names with their likenesses. Despite the many unknowns, the information that can be

gleaned is crucial in providing any semblance of an idea as to the intended purpose of these political sketches, and why they include numerous references to the circus.

First we must look at what little information can be found regarding the self-proclaimed presenter of these sketches: B. Summersgill. In addition to these mysterious prints, Summersgill also printed annual comic almanacs, full of illustrations that ridiculed and commented on the social and political climate of the city of Leeds. It is from Summersgill's connection to Leeds that we can begin to find some foundation to further build an investigation into the *Election Sketches*. Once we have Leeds as our area of likely origin, we can begin to use contemporaneous portraits of British politicians in relation to the portrait identities of the figures in the image.

The date becomes the next question. We are provided with a probable time frame by looking at another image [Figure 6], the third print in the same *Election Sketches* series, this time of a menagerie of animal bodies with human heads in cages, under a large tent. In one of the background cages the same portrait of our main, bearded-equestrian figure has been included, this time attached to the body of a monkey. In front of him, in a position of importance, is the figure of British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. As a young man, Disraeli is almost always depicted as a skinny, well-dressed, and effete dandy, with unruly black hair; and this image is no different. Also featured in the print is the portrait of Disraeli's greatest political opponent, Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone, whose portrait can be seen on the body of a large snake, curled up in a clear glass case. On the case, a sign reads: "Visitors are requested not to come too near this case as it is highly dangerous."

The rivalry between Disraeli and Gladstone was longstanding and inspired many satirical prints in its own right.¹⁸ In 1871, James Hurnard published his epic poem, "The Setting Sun." In it, he referred to Gladstone and Disraeli as "The rival parties in the political circus."¹⁹ A crucial detail as to why the public seems to have had no problem seeing politics and circuses as bedfellows, almost certainly lies in the fact that, due to the large size and acoustical properties, it was not uncommon that politicians would utilize circus venues for their speeches.²⁰ While on the campaign trail in 1868 and again in 1886, Gladstone is known to have used the same buildings that usually housed Hengler's Circus, with seating for approximately 5,000 to 6,000 people, as his venue when he was speaking in Glasgow and Liverpool, respectively.²¹

Under the image, the words "Leeds Winter Fair 1868" have been included in black letters. Disraeli was first made Prime Minister in 1868, only briefly, as a temporary replacement after the residing Prime Minister stepped down due to health concerns. More permanently, Disraeli also served from 1874 to 1880. Although Gladstone was elected as Prime Minister four separate times, a feat never duplicated,



Figure 5. Unknown printer, Victory, circa 1860.

he was also first elected in 1868.

The “Leeds Winter Fair” print’s clear date of 1868 definitely provides a probable date range for the equestrian print, but one cannot assume without further evidence that both refer to the same year. One can with relative certainty, however, assume that the image of the politician-as-equestrian riding two horses at once has a time frame of around 1868, or at the very least between 1868-1880, and is probably related to Leeds politics. Armed with this information, only the comparing of political portraits within this short stretch of British politics, against those of the equestrian print’s portraits, needs to be conducted in order to discover that the figure with each foot on a separate horse is that of Edward Baines Junior.

Edward Baines Junior was elected in 1868 as a member of British Parliament and as an asset to the Liberal Party, a group spearheaded by Prime Minister Gladstone. Like his father before him, he was also the editor of the newspaper,

the *Leeds Mercury*. When Edward Baines Senior bought the *Leeds Mercury*, it was a failing newspaper, with a circulation of scarcely 800 copies. By the 1820s, Baines had turned it into one of the most respected and influential papers in Britain, with a circulation of over 5,000. Under both the leadership of Baines Senior and Junior, the *Leeds Mercury* was a strong advocate for Nonconformist political opinion. Using the *Leeds Mercury* as their mouthpiece, both Baines men championed parliamentary reform, the separation of church and state, the abolition of the slave trade, extending civil liberties, and universal public education.²² Some of these very same political causes—education, reform, and free trade—are present in the equestrian print’s depictions of horses.

Now that we know the main politician being depicted, who are the men that Baines has propped on each of his shoulders? The answer can be found by looking at who else was elected to Parliament, and also had direct connections to Leeds, in November 1868: Robert Meek Carter and William St. James Wheelhouse. Derek Fraser, in his book, *A History of Modern Leeds*, describes “Councillor” R. M. Carter as “[t]he most radical of mid-Victorian Leeds politicians.”²³ In the 1850s and 1860s, the Radical Party started an alliance with the Whigs and Peelites²⁴ in order to conduct the creation of the Liberal Party. In contrast, Fraser describes Wheelhouse as a constant skeptic of free trade, and a staunch member of the Tory Party.²⁵ Their presence in the print now takes on a new, deeper meaning. Standing atop Baines should-

ers, at present they appear to be supporting each other in their shared victorious elections; but a glance at their precarious position, and the threat of separation brought on by the horses beneath them, makes the fleetingness of the scene even more apparent.

It may never be known whether these prints were created as a contemporary commentary on Leeds politics, a political commentary in typical Summersgill’s annual-hindsight format, or even years after the political events being lampooned. But by showing Baines riding two horses simultaneously, while also helping support his fellow parliamentary constituents of Leeds, the artist is strongly suggesting that the Liberal Party is spreading themselves too thin by trying to control too many issues and differing viewpoints at once. Not only are Baines and his fellow political Loiners,²⁶ Carter and Wheelhouse, performing one difficult equestrian feat, they are attempting two tricks at one time. In addition, the horses have been given names representing



Figure 6. Unknown printer, Leeds Winter Fair 1868.

political issues that were controversial at the time, including two horses which are shown between the legs of Baines at one time, making the politicians' eventual fall increasingly imminent.

Over the many years, politicians as varied as President Abraham Lincoln and British Prime Ministers George Hamilton-Gordon, Winston Churchill, and David Cameron, to name but a few, have all been compared to a circus equestrian performing the trick of riding two, or more, horses at once. In order to match current political events, the specific politician being ridiculed varies greatly, as do the labels given to the horses; but just as the aforementioned writer in the Californian newspaper made clear in 1856, there is always the same intended message behind the comparison: serving more than one master will result in a person's downfall.

Despite the innate unfairness of the comparison between the disorganized politics and the well-oiled machine that is the circus, the term "political circus" is unlikely to disappear any time soon. Likewise, time has shown that, fairly or unfairly, the iconic image, appropriated from a famous circus equestrian act, of a man standing atop two horses as he slowly loses control of both animals when they veer off in different directions, resulting in an unceremoni-

ous fall to the ground, has been indelibly burned into the public consciousness relative to politics. If the long history of this specific act in circuses has any singular message, let it be that the riding of two horses, literally or figuratively, is only to be attempted by a trained professional, and at one's own risk. **Bw**

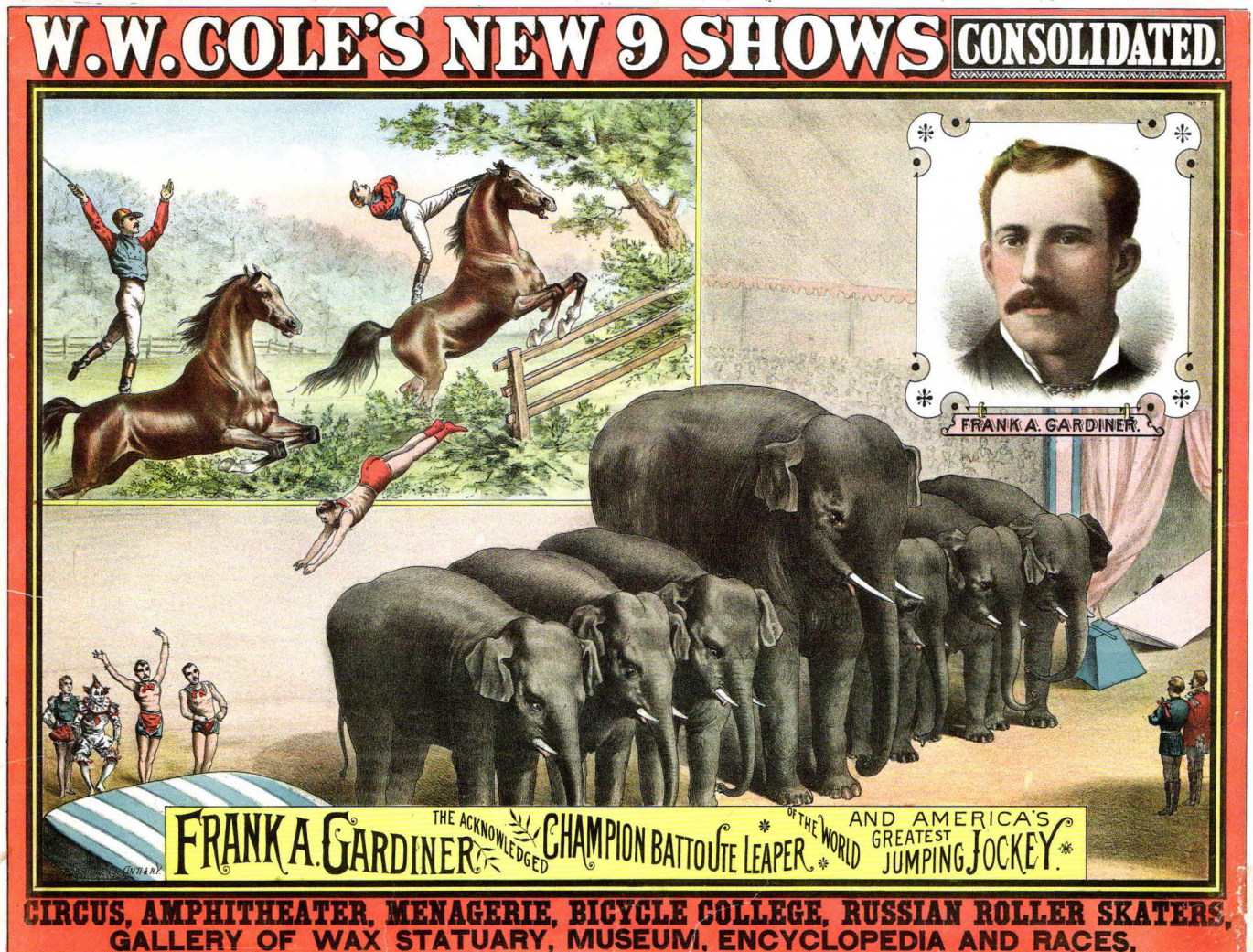
Jason Martin is an aspiring archivist and librarian, with a special interest in art libraries and art archives. He graduated, summa cum laude and with Departmental Honors, with a B.A. in Art History, from Albion College, Michigan in 2012. During his undergraduate studies, he completed a semester abroad at Oxford and a semester of research at The Newberry Library in Chicago. Jason's academic interests include the art of the Northern Renaissance, expressions of gender and sexuality in art, and a wide variety of topics relating to history, specifically European. He is especially fascinated by the history of print culture, caricatures, and cartoons, and hopes to be able to research and write more on the topic in the future. In 2014, Jason was introduced to the compelling world of circus history as a volunteer at both the archives and art library of The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art. He is currently pursuing dual masters degrees in Archival Studies

Endnotes

1. John S. Clarke. *Circus Parade*. Jeremy Mills Publishing, 2008. Orig. Pub. in 1936. p.35
2. I am grateful to Fred Dahlinger, Jr. for pointing out this clear distinction between early equestrian acts and circus performances.
3. John M. Turner. *Victorian Arena—The Performers: a dictionary of British circus biography*. Vol. 1. Formby: Lingdales Press, 1995. p. 6-7.
4. George Speaight. "The First Trick Rider in America." *Bandwagon*. Vol. 33. No. 6. Circus Historical Society. p. 60.
5. Isaac John Greenwood. *The Circus: The Origin and Growth Prior to 1835*. Second Edition. New York: William Abbatt, 1909. p. 26-27.
6. The exact date appears to be a matter of some contention. Some sources assign the date of creation of The Courier Act to 1824 (Thayer), while others state 1827 (Hippisley Coxe). Stuart Thayer. *The Performers: A History of Circus Acts*. Seattle, WA: Dauven and Thayer, 2005. p. 50 and Antony Hippisley Coxe. *A Seat at the Circus*. Hamden, Conn: Archon Books, 1980. p. 59-60.
7. Hippisley Coxe describes the narrative, and name, of The Courier of St. Petersburg as an intended homage to the memory of the French equestrian rider, Paul Cuzent, who died as the result of a bitter cold ride from Pavlovsk to St. Petersburg in 1856, but neglects to explain how this could have been true when Ducrow created the act approximately 30 years prior to Cuzent's death. Hippisley Coxe. p. 60.
8. Thayer, 50. Hippisley Coxe records the number of horses in the Courier Act as varying greatly. He describes Ducrow as performing the act with nine animals; while, later, Cuzent is said to have had as many as twenty-four. Hippisley Coxe. p. 60.
9. Paul John Bedford. *Recollections and Wanderings of Paul Bedford: Facts, Not Fancies*. London: Routledge, Warne, & Routledge, 1868. p. 109.
10. Hippisley Coxe. p. 59-60.
11. For more on the extent of Ducrow's fame, see Hippisley Coxe. p. 60.
12. "Syntax in the Saddle." Sept. 29, 1866. *Fun*—Vol. IV. London: J. Adler. p. 32.
13. "Riding Two Horses at Once." *Marysville Daily Herald*, Vol. VII, No.78. 2 November, 1856.
14. Reprinted in *Mr. Punch's Victorian Era: An Illustrated Chronicle of the Reign her Majesty the Queen—Volume 1*. London: Bradbury, Agnew, & Co., 1887. p. 167. Can be viewed online through Google Books at: <http://books.google.com/books?id=tsoAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA167&ots=6TpD5pG03v&dq=aberdeen%20courier%20of%20st.%20petersburg&pg=PA167#v=onepage&q=aberdeen%20courier%20of%20st.%20petersburg&f=false>
15. Graham Everitt. *English Caricaturists and Graphic Humourists of the Nineteenth Century: How they Illustrated and Interpreted their Times*. Second Ed. London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1893. p. 395.
16. Thayer, 98.
17. The Ringling Museum Archives has five seemingly related prints, but has no way of knowing for sure if they all come from the Summersgill series. The first consists of a cover image that, due to stylistic inconsistency, was likely drawn by a different artist. The second is a print with the identifying "No. 3" and "JFM" marks on it. The third print is likely missing the top section, and is without an identifying number, but also features the monogram of "JFM." A fourth print which is printed on a different type of paper; and, therefore, is white instead of the sepia-tone color of the others, is also unnumbered and features only an "R" mark, presumably the artist's signature. The fifth print is the main image discussed in this article, and features the "No. 10" identification as well as the "JFM" initials.
18. For more information on Gladstone in satirical prints, see William Thomas Stead. "Gladstone in contemporary caricature: being a collection of cartoons..." *Bristol Selected Pamphlets*. University of Bristol Library, 1898.
19. James Hurnard. *The Setting Sun: A Poem in Seven Books*. Second Edition. London: F.B. Kitto, 1871. p. 241.
20. Gladstone is described as giving his speech in the "capacious Circus" which "had been selected as the place of meeting because of its excellent acoustic properties." "The General Election – Mr. Gladstone in Glasgow." *Manchester Guardian*. June 23, 1886.
21. "The Visit of Mr. Gladstone to Liverpool." *Manchester Guardian*. June 24, 1886. For an enthusiastic review and a copy of this speech, see "Mr. Gladstone at Liverpool—Imposing Meeting." *Daily News*. June 29, 1886.
22. Ann Scott, Mervyn Eadie, and Andrew Lees. *William Richard Gowers, 1845-1915: Exploring the Victorian Brain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. p. 78.
23. Derek Fraser. *A History of Modern Leeds*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980. p. 332.
24. Peelites, as followers of Sir Robert Peel, were often called "Liberal Conservatives" in order to create a distinction between them and the "Protectionist Conservatives," led by Benjamin Disraeli. Although both parties had conservative views on many political issues, the main difference between the two parties was their contrasting views on free trade, with the Liberal Conservatives being for it, and the Protectionist Conservatives being in favor of tariffs.
25. Fraser, 345.
26. A nickname given to citizens of Leeds.

The Frank A. Gardner Circus and Its Contemporaries

by Steve Gossard



This Strobridge Litho poster touts Gardner's leaping skills as well as his bareback riding, circa 1882.

Circus World Museum

Portrait of a Circus Man

It is no exaggeration to say that in his time, Frank Gardner's (1855 - 1905) name was a well known throughout the Western Hemisphere, yet he has been literally forgotten to the general public for over a hundred years. The Quincy, Illinois newspapers stated that he was born into poor circumstances and grew up in the communities of Macomb and Galesburg, Illinois (Carl Sandburg made no mention of Galesburg's circus history in his autobiography, *Always*

the Young Strangers, although Gardner was likely the most famous of Galesburg's citizens of the 19th century). Through natural ability and sheer strength of character Gardner became known as one of the greatest performing athletes of all time. As a show manager it was said that he had made and lost several fortunes in his lifetime. His entire company of performers generally had the highest praise for their treatment while under his supervision. In all things Frank Gardner was careful to maintain the strictest integrity. En-

duration and determination were the hallmarks of his character.¹ Calling himself the “P.T. Barnum of South America,” Gardner’s story is interwoven with many other well-recognized performers of his day as they forged new routes, touring the entertainments of the American big tops throughout Central and South America.²

1883

Frank Gardner had earned a reputation as the greatest bounding jockey in America and was considered by most people in the circus profession to be the greatest double somersault leaper in the world. His rivalries with other renowned leapers of the day, such as William Batcheller and Fred O’Brien, generated great excitement for their remarkable performances of battoute, or spring board, leaping over horses, camels, and elephants. His passport document of 1890 described him as five foot five and-a-half inches tall, with hazel eyes, dark hair, and an olive complexion. His talent had earned him top billing with Dan Rice’s Paris Pavilion, Burr Robbins Circus, and W.W. Cole’s Monster Shows. By 1878 Gardner was traveling to Cuba with the Orrin Bros. Circus during the off-season.³

In 1883, Gardner was embarking on a new chapter in his entertainment career – becoming entrepreneur in a new circus venture with partner, John S. McMahon, to tour Central and South America. McMahon was 29 years old, Gardner was 27, and they were both just beginning their careers as show managers. On December 15, 1883 Gardner and McMahon boarded the steamship, *City of Dallas* at New Orleans with a company of circus people including Frank’s wife, Mildred; Dave Castello and wife; Mrs. Lawrence and daughter; James Messenger, a “Graeco-Roman wrestler;” Alfred Dorian; Charles Benner; Gardner’s stepbrother, Charles Dunsworth; Leon Soulie; Harry Keese (or Keys); Daniel Smith, and George Castello. They first sailed to Belize, British Honduras, and then to Central America and the Pacific Coast. Frank and Mildred (nee Cora B. Mossberg, b. March 1859) had wed only two years before, in Ohio County, West Virginia in January of 1881. Now, finishing the season with the W.W. Cole Circus, the Gardners were about to begin an adventure.⁴

In April the *New York Clipper* reported that the McMahon and Gardner Circus “went on the shoals through unfortunate management.” Just how far the show had travelled by that time is open to conjecture. Though they had had a good show, they had split up. Some of their people were waiting to join another troupe which was coming up the coast from Costa Rica; others had to find transportation back to the States. It was reported that Gardner and McMahon owed salaries to everyone on the show. “There is a good chance here every year for a circus well-managed and well-billed in advance,” the *Clipper* reported, “and which will do as is done at home in thinly-settled districts-that is, come, skip from

point to point, and either firstly or lastly settle down here in the capital, where for a month or two months’ paying business awaits them, showing on off-nights with the dramatic or the operatic troupe, as the case may be.” The passenger list of the *City of Dallas* on its return to New Orleans from Belize, British Honduras included: Frank A. Gardner, age 27, occupation “artist”; Cora B. Gardner, L. Lawrence, age 45; F. Lawrence, age 26; J. Castello, age 29; Ada Castello, age 27; and J. S. McMahon, age 36 [record keeper’s error?]. Among Gardner’s baggage were two trunks of wardrobe and personal items, two bags of circus wardrobe and paper, one dog and one cage of three parrots. The Castelllos’ luggage included “1 trunk webbing appliance” (possibly a net for aerial work) and one cage of parrots. The “J. Castello” listed was probably George Castello who served as advance agent for the S. H. Barrett and Company’s Great Show of the 1880s. Equestrian, Ada Castello (and her “famous manege horse, Jupiter”), was the wife of bareback rider, Dave Castello. Booking agent and manager John S. McMahon would live only nine more years, dead of tuberculosis in November 1892.⁵

Belize was near the Mosquito Coast and the Bay of Islands, which had been contested between the British and Spanish for centuries. Though it was thought by some to be an “insignificant bit of unhealthy coast,” it was considered to be one of the most important ports to supply Central America, and one of the principal sources of mahogany - said to be as precious as gold in Europe.⁶

The *Clipper* reported on the third of May that Frank and Mildred Gardner, Castello and wife, Mrs. Lawrence and daughter, John McMahon and wife, Charles Benner, and Charles Dunsworth had all returned from Guatemala. Gardner denied rumors that his people were not paid. He stated that the reason for the failure was “rainy season and not having a country to go to.” The difficulty may have stemmed from having an inexperienced advance agent who was not used to the conditions in Central America. Before returning, Frank had sold eight horses to the Guatemalan government for \$4,000. Thirty-six years later Roy Feltus, of the Gran Circo Shipp and Feltus show described the pitfalls of circuses that might hazard a foray into the Latin-American regions:

Haphazard jumps down there in the amusement business, without first giving those countries a careful survey, have always met with disastrous results and the proper information as to just what is wanted by the Latin-American public can only be had thru actual experience. In many cases this experience is dearly bought, but when sound business principles, along with square dealing and good common sense, are applied some satisfactory results have been attained.



Gardner among other performers on the 1881 Barnum & London circus.
 Author's collection

One of the most essential things to know when touring South America is the climatic conditions... With the Shipp and Feltus Circus we jumped into Santiago, Chile one year in July, and it was then that we realized so strongly that the seasons down there are just opposite from those in North America... In Bolivia there are only two months in the year that are safe for outdoor amusement... The Latin-American public knows good amusement when it sees it and is very liberal in its approval and support, but it also takes these same people to show their disapproval of something ordinary that has been handed them."⁷

Yet this was already familiar territory for North American circus men. Circus historian C.G. Sturtevant noted that there were different directions that U.S. circus entrepreneurs pursued in the nineteenth century when they traveled abroad: to Europe, to the "Orient including Australia," and to the West Indies, Central and South America. "After forty or fifty years of experience," Sturtevant stated, "there had been developed over here a circus that was distinctly (North) American, and in size and method of operation was highly appreciated." So highly appreciated, in fact, that "for over a period of years nearly all performers of reputation

accepted engagements during the winter with these shows for at least one trip." Sturtevant traced the history of these expatriate shows back more than one hundred years, beginning with the Jos. D. Palmer Circus which traveled to Havana, Cuba in 1837 and Peter Coty's Circus which went to the West Indies in 1838.⁸

Frank Gardner, himself, had been to Havana, Cuba the winter of 1880-1881 with the Leon and Dockrill Circus when he and his great rival, William Batcheller, had competed in a leaping contest. Yet the experience had not completely qualified him to manage his own circus in the region three years later. Circus companies were drawn to the southern tropics like treasure hunters. The rumors of enormous profits were legendary. The Great North American Expedition show traveled to San Salvador and Venezuela in 1873, and the *New York Clipper* reported that "the crush at the door was so great that Mr. Pearce (either the manager or the ticket seller) was compelled to relinquish his post, and the surging mass of people had penetrated almost to the ring..." The management forced the crowd back to take tickets at the door. "The crowd inside was so dense that the performance was given with great difficulty," the correspondent reported. The crowd then became an "unruly mob," and tore the canvas to pieces. It became necessary to build a fence seven feet high around the circus compound. Reports of this frenzied lust for entertainment were enough to inspire the ambitions of circus men in the northern hemisphere.⁹

At any rate, on their return to the U.S. Mildred Gardner was reportedly recovering from an illness contracted in their travels. Frank stated that her recovery was "worth all the money they lost." With the promise to return to Guatemala later in the year, Frank joined the Sells Brothers Circus in Indianapolis. By mid-September Gardner had taken another circus company to San Juan on the island of Puerto Rico for a three week engagement. For the first few years Gardner's circus confined its activities to Central America (mainly the Panama area) and the Indies. As time went by and his agents became more familiar with the territory, the show would venture farther and farther south, as we will see.¹⁰

From 1884 to 1885 Frank and Mildred Gardner toured with the Sells Brothers Circus when in the States. Of his horseback riding, it was said:

"Frank Gardner is certainly one of the best bareback riders in the country. He is graceful, strong, fearless, and is active as a cat. He seems a part of the horse, whether he is standing, sitting, lying or balancing himself on one foot while his horse jumps hurdles. His great feat is a leap to his horse's back-a flat-footed jump-while his horse is in full gallop. He alights on his feet on the horse's back, and stands erect while the animal runs around the ring."¹¹



A poster for Mildred Gardner, circa 1882, printed by Strobridge.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

Gardner was advertised as “The Astounding Highland... Leaper and Hurdle Rider, who stands without rival.” Mildred was called “The Beautiful, Intrepid and Graceful Manège Equestrienne.” Even after his death Gardner was recalled by his fellow showmen as “one of the grittiest and most fearless horsemen that ever performed in a ring.”

The Gardners visited Mildred’s sister, “Mrs. Wallace, on Sixteenth Street” in Wheeling, West Virginia in September. The *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* reported September 28, “Mrs. Gardner is a former Wheeling lady, nee Miss Cora Mossburg. Mr. Gardner was formerly one of Barnum’s leading performers, and is admitted to be the champion leaper of the world...”

1885

Frank Gardner entered into a new partnership with James Donovan and Harry Lamkin, of Petersburg, Illinois in 1885 intending to take another circus south. A “prestiditeur [sic] and ventriloquist” named Francisco Moberly wrote to the *Clipper* in March stating that the Gardner,

Lamkin and Donovan Circus had spent five or six weeks in Colon, Panama, before sailing for Kingston, Jamaica on February 21. The plan was to go from there to Cuba before returning to the United States. Of the company it was stated that Mlle. Minnetta, “the Female Sampson,” was a big attraction in Colon. The trip from New York to Colon in the 1890s took seven days, with three steam ships running every month, the fare was from \$75 to \$90 per person. Each person was allowed 200 pounds of baggage checked free, with an additional charge of two cents per pound, but in crossing the isthmus by rail they were only allowed fifteen pounds free, and three cents per pound for excess. All such costs were certainly covered by the circus management. At this early date, Jamaica may have already been planning the International Exhibition, which would take place in 1891, but was all but ignored by the United States. On their return to the States, Frank and Mildred Gardner, along with Mlle. Minnetta were found working with the Sells Brothers Circus.¹²

Gardner and Lamkin’s partner, James Donovan, was



Leaping contests like this Strobbridge poster for The Great London Circus in 1880 generated a lot of publicity for shows and performers. The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

well known as a leaper and horseback rider. J. L. Hutchinson, of the great Barnum and London Circus, stated in 1882 that Donovan, who, along with William Dutton and William Batcheller, had travelled to Europe in 1881 as one of "three of our best men," and astonished the European audiences with their powerful leaping skills. Hutchinson added that "Donovan is (the) only (man) doing (leaping over) ten horses with four high on top".¹³

Harry Lamkin was well known in the profession as a "pediatial equilibrist," or foot juggler, and leaper. He had run away with the Michael O'Connor Circus, in Galesburg in the early 1870s, and had surely met Gardner in those days wintering in Galesburg, Illinois. In 1882, J.L. Hutchinson claimed that "a dozen years ago there was only one man in the country who did the double somersault" from the springboard in the circus, and that was someone named "Lambkins." This remark likely referred to Harry Lamkin; however Hutchinson added that within a few years the advent of improved springboard apparatus made it possible for dozens of leapers to execute the trick. In fact, in 1881 the Barnum

and Hutchinson show had thirty double somersault leapers in its cast. Harry Lamkin's half-brother, Edward Shipp, had this to say about the Lamkin and Gardner Circus of 1885-1886, Shipp's first trip south of the United States:

"In 1885-6 I was in Panama and doubt if I shall ever again see money so free as it was there. The canal was in process of construction and each contractor built a little town, so there were twenty or thirty along the canal. There were absolutely no accommodations, but the people were in for any kind of entertainment, and the circus' visit invariably called for a lavish expenditure of money."¹⁴

Sturtevant provides this description of the logistics of how such shows were produced:

"The equipment taken was usually for a one ring performance, but the audience demanded first class artists. As a rule the proprietor or his agent

came to New York to engage people following the close of the circus season in the United States each year. Equipment was then purchased, but seldom were any animals used except those that performed. Lithographs and board paper were purchased in (North) America, but heralds, date sheets, programs, etc. were of native production. Nearly all the performers were sent from New York with contracts that guaranteed return transportation...

The staff of one of these circuses usually consisted of a general and routing agent, an agent to make local contracts, and a press agent. If they spoke Spanish, so much the better and their pay was higher, but sometimes it was necessary to employ native interpreters or assistant agents. Usually the band leader was American, and all or part of the musicians might be, but more often they were natives. The boss hostler, boss canvasman, and light man were usually Americans, as was the general superintendent, equestrian director, treasurer and other necessary staff. Usually in each country visited the interpreter was the press agent back and also the adjuster.¹⁵

These shows were able to play the large coastal towns for several weeks on end before moving on by steamship, and seldom ventured far inland. The La Estrella del Norte; Gardner, Lamkin and Donovan's circus sailed October 17 on the ship, *Barraconta*, for Georgetown, Demerara, in British Guiana, on the north coast of South America, to follow with the "principal cities of South America." The show had seven ring horses and a 120 foot round top. The roster included:

Mme. Clarinda Lowande	Mlle. Julia Lowande
Mildred Gardner	Maude Oswald
Frank Gardner	James Donovan
Harry Lamkin	Edward Shipp
James Murray	David R. Hawley
Nelson Curry	Willie Edwards
Charles Dunsworth ¹⁶	

Clarinda Lowande was the wife of Harry Lamkin. David Hawley, one of the great pioneers of flying trapeze in America, was working as a trapeze aeronaut in the 1880s, performing on a trapeze slung beneath a balloon. Maude Oswald was listed as a hippodrome rider. Nelson Curry, the horizontal bar artist, had been called "America's Greatest Gymnast" with Barton and Logan's Dime Museum in 1886. He was married to "Miss Alma," a trapeze artist in Louisville, Kentucky in July of 1881. Though they were originally from Philadelphia, the Lowande family had toured South America for so long that they were known as the "Brazilian Family." This extensive clan of great horseback riders came



Clarinda Lowande.

Circus World Museum

to reside in Petersburg, Illinois where Lamkin had built a ring barn for practice and performance.¹⁷

A conflict arose with bar performer and ringmaster, Ed Baldwin, who claimed that he had boarded the boat to travel with the Gardner, Lamkin and Donovan Circus but left before the ship set sail because he had not received any advance salary or contract. The response from the Gardner show was that Baldwin had been paid twenty-five dollars in advance and a contract was drafted. "It seems to be an individual matter in which a question of veracity is involved between Mr. Baldwin and Geo. Francis," the *Clipper* reported.

1886

They continued the tour into 1886, and were reported doing good business in Venezuela before heading for Pana-



Julia Lowande.

Circus World Museum

ma. At "Curacoz," (possibly Curacao, an island off the north coast) on January 6, Gardner sold his spotted trick horse, Mahomet, which had grown too old for sea travel. February 25, 1886 Harry Lamkin died of yellow fever in Colon, Panama and was buried there. The company arrived back in New York on March 17.¹⁸

In April of 1886 Frank Gardner teamed up with variety show manager Nick Roberts to open a two ring circus in Brooklyn, New York "at cheap prices." The roster included Harry Lamkin's half-brother, Ed Shipp; Shipp's future wife, Julia Lowande; and Harry Lamkin's widow, Clarinda Lowande Lamkin. In October the Gardner and Roberts Circus, under the management of "Bancroft and Hathaway," ran into difficulties. The *New York Tribune* reported on October 25 that they had closed a week's engagement in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and were stranded there. Gardner, it was said, had gone to New York on business and did not return. The performers had not been paid in six weeks, and the show could not meet expenses. The *Clipper* reported November 13:

Nick Roberts made an injunction Nov. 4 to judge Bartlett of Brooklyn, N.Y., to have the partnership between

Frank Gardner and himself dissolved and an injunction issued restraining Gardner from selling the property. Judge Bartlett granted the injunction and appointed D.H. Castello receiver. The latter's duties will not be very arduous, for, despite the injunction, Gardner has taken most of the "stuff" with him to South America. The only things left are some debts and a few articles of no value.¹⁹

1887

The Gardner and Donovan Circus opened at Georgetown, Demerara November 17, 1886 "to good business," the *Clipper* reported December 11, and had given a special performance for the governor and lady of Georgetown the afternoon of November 24. From there they planned a trip to Trinidad for ten days. Why Gardner and Donovan were reported returning to New York from London in late December is a mystery, but it was said that Donovan was fitting up a new show for South America at that time. Later in January it was reported that although the Dockrill Circus had floundered in Colon (the agent, Jesse W. Foster attached the show for wages) the Gardner and Donovan Circus followed them doing very well, planning to make ten stands during this tour. The roster of performers who returned with them March 26 were:

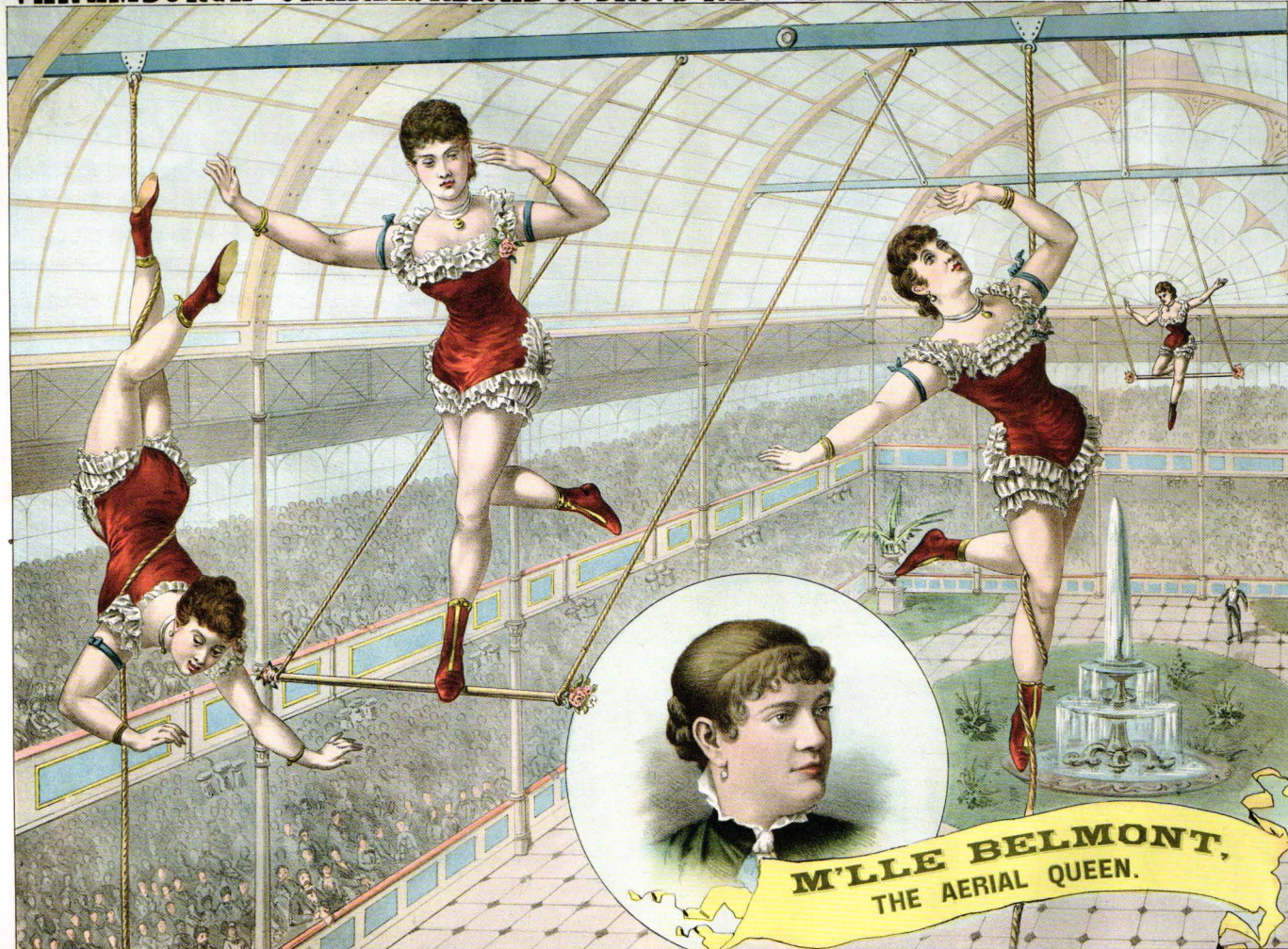
James Donovan	Frank A. Gardner
Col. Jesse W. Foster	James Murray
Frank Ashton	Edward Shipp
Prof. Davis	Charles Dunsworth
Samuel Dawes	Oliver Stephens
Mildred Gardner	Clarinda Lamkin
Josie Ashton	Jennie Bordeaux
Maude Baker ²⁰	

In April Gardner and Donovan were speculating. They bought the bar privileges for the American Exhibition and Wild West show in London for six months. In May they sold those privileges, making a profit of ten thousand dollars. In early June, Frank Gardner's mother, Mrs. Jennie Dunsworth, died in Galesburg, Illinois at age 55. She was the wife of James Dunsworth, an engineer for the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad. The *Clipper* reported that Jennie was "beloved by many people of the white tents." Though it was later reported that Jennie had been a great equestrienne at one time, this claim has not been substantiated.²¹

When the Gardners joined the Sells Brothers Circus at Grand Rapids, Michigan June 7, 1887, James Donovan stayed in New York "to fit up the Gardner and Donovan Show for a South American tour." In mid-August Frank and Mildred Gardner left the Sells Brothers Circus to join the S. H. Barrett's New United Railroad Monster Shows, Frank leading the battoute leaping line and performing his bounding jockey act, Mildred riding ménage. In October the *Clip-*

VANAMBURGH-CHARLES REICHE & BRO.'S NEW RAILROAD SHOWS

HYATT FROST, MANAGER
39TH YEAR



AMERICAN AND JAPANESE CIRCUS, MUSEUM AQUARIUM AND MENAGERIE.

This Strobridge litho was printed for Lottie Belmont circa 1885.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

per reported that Frank Gardner and Danny O'Brien had made two of the greatest double somersault leaps ever witnessed; O'Brien's over six camels and two elephants, Gardner's over eight camels and two elephants, "all in a square."

That winter Gardner took another show south, this time with partner, James Sturgis. The *Clipper* published a short prospective roster in November:

Mrs. Viola Rivers
Ed Garon
Miss Dunsworth

George Garon
William Scott
Charles Dunsworth ²²

Gardner and Sturgis, sailed from New Orleans to Colon on December 6, three days ahead of the rest of the show. Three elephants followed them the tenth. This was somewhat unusual. Sturtevant tells us that large animals were generally not taken on these ventures. Since most of the travel was by ship at sea, animals often had to be loaded by crane on and

off the boat, a dangerous proposition for valuable animals. Gardner, being the world famous leaper, may have wanted the elephants for the leaping feature of the show. The Nelson Family of acrobats closed with Sweatnam, Rice and Fagan's Minstrels in December and traveled to join the Gardner and Sturgis show December 17, 1887. ²³

1888

Early in the year saw the end of Gardner's corroboration with James Donovan. Donovan had taken another show out independently that year. Donovan's circus had traveled as far as Jamaica in March of 1888. The *Clipper* reported that The Great American Circus and Las Estrellas del Norte, James Donovan and Company arrived March 23 in New York after a successful trip to the Isthmus of Panama and the island of Jamaica. It was later reported, however, that several people from the "stranded" Donovan show had joined Gardner's circus. The list of those returning to New York included:

James Donovan
Robert Stickney
Lottie Belmont
Harry Carey
Etta Corbett
Charles Belmont
Little Viola
Thomas McAvoy
Charles Frisco
Johnson Gorman²⁴

Col. Jesse W. Foster
Daisy Belmont
John R. Castello
Walter Scott
Mlle. Marrietta
Mrs. W. V. Fairchilds
Robert Stickney, Jr.
James Lowden
William Munroe

ular through the turn of the century. On the variety stage Charles also presented a dog act while Lottie did a rolling globe act. The Belmont's daughter, Daisy, an equestrienne, was married in 1891 to the "dashing young equestrian," William Showles.²⁵

Gardner's Circus Americano opened at Panama on February 15, 1888 for two weeks, closing March 23, and planning to head to the Pacific Coast of South America. It is not known whether Gardner made it to the west coast in 1888, however. It would require considerable effort to move a circus through the tropical country to the west coast, even by rail, since the canal was still under construction at that time. At some point early in the tour Gardner purchased complete control of his circus from James Sturgis. His agent, George Mackey, had finished in Costa Rica and was headed to join the show in Panama. But the Gardner circus was still planning to travel on to Colon; Caracas, Venezuela; Demerara, British and Dutch Indies; and then back to South America. In April the Gardner circus was in Venezuela, where he opened to "an overflowing business, which has not

Col. Jesse W. Foster served as advance agent. Robert Stickney was the great equestrian and leaper, and Harry Carey was clown and equestrian director. Charles and Lottie Belmont performed a double trapeze act in which Lottie "while hanging suspended head downward, lifts 650 pounds of humanity, and gains rounds of applause." Lottie had been a feature of W. C. Coup's Circus performing a balancing trapeze act earlier in the decade. Acts of strength on the trapeze, especially when performed by women, were pop-



Charles Belmont performed an aerial act with wife Lottie, circa 1880. The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

Daisy Belmont, daughter of Charles and Lottie Belmont, circa 1880. The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

yet abated.” Favorites with the crowd were Frank Gardner, himself, and contortionist Alfred Dorian. Some time that month Edward Neary, a clown with the show, died of a liver ailment.

For Americans, traveling to the British West Indies and Venezuela in the 1880s and 1890s would have posed challenges. A conflict over the possession of overlapping territory was raging between Great Britain and the government of Venezuela. This conflict had been inherited from the Dutch and Spanish, and had been left unresolved for centuries due to the fact that the area in dispute was, until then, undeveloped. The United States government was undecided as to its role in the dispute. The newspapers were particularly divided as to their loyalties to one side or the other. The city of Caracas was described as an ideal setting, situated in a lush valley, with perfect weather and beautiful, honest citizens (population variously reported as 65,000-80,000), but travel to and from the city was difficult. Besides the turbulent sea voyage requiring passage through dangerous straits, the journey by rail over the mountains from the port city of La Guaira was treacherous.²⁶

While New York was socked in by a late winter blizzard, it was reported that the Frank Gardner Circus was completing its tour in March, however the Gardner show would continue for another three months. At the end of the season the entire company published their thanks to Frank Gardner for his fair treatment. Testimonials of this sort became the norm for the Frank Gardner Circus for a number of years. The Gardner show had toured for five months, and closed at Demerara in June. He rented a government building in Georgetown for his stock. The *Wheeling Intelligencer* stated that Gardner had returned by the first of August, and was in New York fitting up his circus in September. The roster of the Gardner show at that point was listed as:

Nelsonia
Alfred Dorian
Philo Nathan

Retlaw (Prince Pharaoh)
John Saunders
Charles M. Dunsworth

Edward Neary
Robert Memhard
Willie Debolieu
Willie Edwards
Blanche Edwards²⁷

Edward F. Howard
Albert Debolieu
Henry Debolieu
Miss Sallie Marks

Gardner was already fitting up a new show for South America the following month, and requesting communication with Natalio B. Lowande. The Lowande family had many years of experience traveling in the Southern Hemisphere, and Gardner, no doubt, would find him extremely useful, but Natalio did not join the Gardner show that year.



Linda Jeal was a feature on the Barnum show in 1879.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

James Sturgis, meanwhile, had teamed up with James Donovan. The James Sturgis and James Donovan's Gran Circo Estrellas Del Nortis left New York on October 20 for Kingston, Jamaica aboard the *City of Paris*. They planned a six month tour of the West Indian Islands. The roster included:

Robert Stickney
Elena Jeal
Harry Van Auken
Emma Lake
The Wilson Sisters

Linda Jeal
James Murray
Frank Long
Mlle. Blanche

Linda Jeal, who was known as the “Queen of the Flaming Zone,” would later marry clown James Murray. Van Auken and Long were outstanding stationary bar performers, and the three Wilson Sisters were acrobats ranging from twelve to seventeen years of age.

Emma Lake was considered to be one of the greatest equestriennes of the age, specializing in side-saddle performance. The show included a band of ten pieces, with a 110 ft. round top. They left Panama, the *Clipper* reported, on their way to Valencia, Venezuela; Portobelo, Panama; and interior towns. They were at Caracas, Venezuela April 9, and went to Trinidad on May 10 for a stay of eight to ten days, leaving for Georgetown on October thirteenth. The animals were quartered in Panama.²⁸

1889

A note appeared in the *Clipper* January 5, 1889 stating, “H.J. Magee and Frank Gardner wish to be remembered to their American friends. Their theatres are doing a nice business.” Willie Aymar, well-known in the profession as an equestrian and “carpet” acrobat died at Kingston, Jamaica on December 29, 1888. Sallie Marks was reported ill.

While the Gardner show was in the Indies, Sturgis and Donovan’s American Circus was touring Central America. They went on to the west coast, Lima and Callao, Peru for two weeks late in February. From there they followed with Iquique, Chile for two weeks, then to Valparaiso March 16, and then to Argentina.

After finishing with the Donovan show, Jesse W. Foster hired on with Gardner’s circus as manager, possibly wanting to remain on the west coast. The Gardner show was at Iquique, Chile May 24 with a 110 foot round top, twenty-six lengths of seats, eight tiers high, 423 reserved chairs, 36 private boxes seating six each. The show was described as having a “double company in its route, circus tent, theatre and race course.” The company included:

Frank A. Gardner	Col. Jesse W. Foster
Manuel S. Lee	James Murray
Fred Leslie	Lou Leslie
Louis Ducrow	Dan Ducrow
Harry Carey	Arthur DaComa
Frank Long	Harry Van Auken

Eugene Kennebel
Linda Jeal
Elena Jeal
Bellotta Ducrow
Lydia DaComa

Mildred Gardner
Sallie Marks
Nellie Ryland
Mlle. Marietta
Nina Viola²⁹

The DaComa family was well known through the 1890s for having a flying return trapeze act on the Ringling circus. The show had ten horses including Mildred Gardner’s two horses, Wonder and Peacock, two donkeys for Dan Ducrow’s Educated Donkeys act, three ponies, Fred Leslie’s troupe of dogs, and Mlle Marietta’s doves. Manuel Lee served as agent. The show gave 26 performances in Valparaiso, 35 in Santiago “and the house was packed at every one,” the *Clipper* reported. This was the first mention of the Ducrow family, later described as a flying return act with a lady catcher. The show continued their route to Callao, Guayaquil, and Lima, Peru; Tacna, just north of Chile, Iquique,



THE DACOMAS, AERIALISTS.

The DaComas as they appeared in the route book for the 1897 Ringling show.

Author’s collection

Valparaiso, and anticipated moving on to Buenos Aires on the east coast. So saying, it is not likely that the Gardner show actually played at Buenos Aires in 1889. The show probably would not have been prepared to travel by land across the interior. The 1890s would usher in an era of political upheaval for the west coast of South America due to the influx of foreign trade.³⁰

Meanwhile, Sturgis and Donovan were having difficulties. “Sturgis and Donovan left Valparaiso very shabbily,” the *Clipper* reported in June, “having only a few native people... and Robert Stickney, Emma Lake and a colored contortionist called Kralee. The latter was married to a very nice little lady native of Iquique.” This company, all told, had eight people, three horses, and one dog. The Samuel Nelson family, and the John Nelson family,

including Robert, Julia, Raynetta and Aida, left the Sturgis and Donovan show and continued with a show of their own. At that time the Jeal sisters, Elena and Linda, closed with the Sturgis and Donovan show and joined the Frank Gardner Circus.

Harry Van Auken and Frank Long returned to New York from the Gardner show at Guayaquil, Ecuador, South America July 8, and Fred H. Leslie returned to his home in Baltimore in August.³¹ The Frank A. Gardner Double Circo returned to the west coast of South America, playing at Lima and Callao. In fact, they played both places at the same time; at Lima in the Politeama (theater) and at Callao under canvas. The *Clipper* reported August 31:

...on this visit Mr. Gardner's name here gave him new laurels, and the Government represented by Colonel Tafour made him such tempting offers that, notwithstanding the regular nightly shows and corresponding matinees, he consented to give a performance (in the) afternoon on Sunday, July 28 (Peru's Fourth of July). A 44 ft. ring was built in the immense picadero (bull ring). It is 254 ft. in diameter, and outside of this are boxes and seats for over 10,000 people (in the Plaza de Acho). Frank

Gardner never before rode so great and good. His leaps from the ground to his horse's back while the animal fairly flew through the air set the vast audience wild with enthusiasm, and the cheers of the multitude could be heard for a mile away.

Harry Van Auken and Mr. and Mrs. DaComa had left the show at this point. H. Kralee and Geo. Wolffe, champion long distance bicyclist, had joined.

Meanwhile, the *Clipper* reported that Sturgis and Donovan had again run into difficulties. They were "whistled out of" Guayaquil, Ecuador with a heavy fine for...

"...defrauding the people by advertising as they did and giving such a poor show. When they passed through the Isthmus of Panama warrants were issued for the arrest of Mr. Sturgis, but while the officers were watching for him to go by steamer to the United States, he disguised himself and escaped by the French steamer to Venezuela and thence home.

Undaunted, Donovan then entered into partnership

P.T. BARNUM'S GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH, AND GREAT LONDON CIRCUS,
TRAVELING THIS SEASON ONLY ~~UNITED~~ ACTUAL EXPENSES DAILY \$ 4,500 00.

MISS EMMA LAKE.



SANGER'S ROYAL BRITISH MENAGERIE AND GRAND INTERNATIONAL ALLIED SHOWS.
A COMBINATION OF THE 4 LARGEST SHOWS. * P.T. BARNUM, J.A. BAILEY & J.L. HUTCHINSON, * A CONSOLIDATION OF THE 4 BEST SHOWS.
* ——— SOLE OWNERS. ——— *

Equestrienne Emma Lake's poster was printed by Strobridge in 1881.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

with Robert Stickney and formed another show. An ad for the Stickney and Donovan Circus ran in the October 5 issue of the *Clipper* calling it the "best and most numerous company that ever sailed out of this port." The roster of the show up to that point was:

Charles W. Fish	Viola Rivers
Emma Lake	George Caron
Blanche Edwards	Willie Edwards
Signor Continin	The Barteldo Family
Ed Franconi ³²	

Charles W. Fish was one of the greatest equestrians of all time while Viola Rivers was an equestrienne who specialized in juggling on horseback. The Barteldo Family were gymnasts and Ed Franconi presented a dog act.

The Donovan and Stickney show sailed on about October 12, business address, 648 Broadway, New York. By late December they were showing in Venezuela. From there they planned to go first to Trinidad, and then back to Caracas.



Aerialist Louis Ducrow, photographed in Venezuela circa 1889. The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

At the beginning of the new year, 1890 the Donovan and Stickney Circus had reportedly arrived at La Guairá, South America. They had returned to Venezuela by March.³³

1890

By the end of 1889 the Gardner show had concluded 42 performances in Santiago, Chili, and moved on to Valparaíso. A rumor circulated that Frank Gardner had fallen from his horse and broken his neck, "but we discredit it," the *Clipper* reported December 28. According to the short, biographical article published in the *New York Dramatic News* August 15, 1891, Gardner's tour of 1889 included the West Indies, and lasted one year and eight months, continuing into 1890. The passenger list of the S. S. *Colon* departing Aspinwall, Panama, and arriving in New York March 13, 1890 included "Circus Riders, Acrobats-Jugglers" and gave their various ages:

Frank A. Gardner (age 35)	Mrs. F.A. Gardner (29)
Louis Leslie (39)	J.M. Balabraca (32)
Mrs. J.M. Balabraca (22)	Frank Long (33)
Harry Carey (37)	Mrs. H. Carey (23)
Miss M.V. Carey (4)	

The *Clipper* reported March 22 that Frank A. Gardner and his circus troupe had returned to the U.S. after one year and four months (four months shorter than the 1891 *New York Dramatic News* article would claim). The roster of people reported by the *Clipper* was larger, and they may not have all returned with the same ship:

Frank and Mildred Gardner	Mr. and Mrs. Harry Carey
Mlle. Marietta	Nina Viola
Frank Long	Louis Leslie
Harry Warner	Charles Dunsworth
J.M. Balabraca	Emma Lynden (Balabraca)

Gardner planned to begin reorganizing later that month. The performers commented on the kind treatment they received from Frank and Mildred in a long letter which appeared in the *Clipper* March 22, sent from Valparaíso, Chile. It was signed:

Bellotta Ducrow	Mrs. Harry Carey
Linda Jeal	Elena Jeal
Nellie Ryland	Mlle. Marrieta
Nina Viola	Sallie Marks
James Murray	Harry Carey
Louis Leslie	Dan Ducrow
Louis Ducrow	Prof. Harry Warner
Frank Long	Eugene Kennebel
Balabraca	Emma Lynden (Balabraca) ³⁴

The Ducrows (Dan, Louis, and Bellotta), the Jeals (Linda, Elena, and Nellie Ryland, Elena's daughter and bareback rider), James Murray, and Robert Nelson had not returned with the rest of the Gardner show. They formed a company of their own with "some native talent," and remained in Chile. Apparently the Jeals organized the enterprise because they did not want to return home with their stock in the cold weather. Eugene Kennebel stayed in Lima, Peru to fulfill a generous engagement there. Sallie Marks stayed in Iquique.

Prof. Harry Warner, the aeronaut, returned to New Orleans to reequip his balloons, and planned to return again to Argentina. The daring but hapless Mr. Warner had begun his career as a wire walker, walking long distances between buildings and over lake waters. In July of 1879 Warner had been planning to cross from one building to another in Wheeling, West Virginia. "About half-past seven o'clock," the *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* reported, "the Professor put his head out of the window...long enough to announce to the multitude below that he would shortly waltz across the rope." Warner's agents were expected to pass among the crowd and "take up an old-fashioned Methodist collection, etc." The crowd "thinned as rapidly as if it had been struck by a Western tornado." Warner appeared at the window again a half hour later to announce that he would not be making the trek across the wire because he had not made enough money to cover expenses. Just a month later, Warner was "insulted" and jeered at by a few "smart young men," again in Wheeling, and someone threw an egg at him. The *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* admonished these young men, stating that "if they have no respect for themselves they should for the community." The Professor complained to the mayor, the reporter said, "but we understand that functionary had no time to attend to such matters." Mildred Gardner's home town was Wheeling, and it is possible that she was acquainted with Prof. Warner before he was hired for the Gardner show in 1890.

Louis Leslie returned home to Baltimore before going out with Frank Gardner's Circus again. Mr. and Mrs. Harry Carey planned to visit friends at home before returning with Gardner's circus. Frank Long planned to recruit a new partner, and return with Gardner's circus as well. Gardner's stock remained in the south due to the cold weather.

Meanwhile, Gardner's former partner, J.S. McMahon, was operating a circus in Portland, Oregon. The Sturgis show was having big business in Martinique though few people showed at Barbados, West Indies. They opened in Brazil on February 1 to big business. Sturgis continued down the coast to Uruguay, Paraguay, and Argentina. At Para, tight rope walker and equilibrist, Josie Limore joined the troupe. Leader of the band, Manuel Sarti died of Bright's disease of the kidneys while aboard the French steamer, *Canada* en

route to Venezuela. He was buried at Carupano, Venezuela.³⁵

An ad for the Gardner circus ran in the *Clipper* March 22: "NOW REORGANIZING FOR GRAND TWO YEARS TOUR OF THE WORLD." He requested riders, acrobats, gymnasts, bar performers, bicycle riders, roller skaters, musical teams, a three brother act, a good clown that could speak Spanish, "or any act suitable for stage or ring." He also wanted a ten piece band and trained stallions or "bronco horses," as well as animal acts. Gardner listed his address as "Gardner c/o Coleman House or Booth's Printing House, 201 Centre St., N.Y." April 5 the *Clipper* ran another request for talent for "GRAN CIRCO GARDNER, FRANK A. GARDNER, CHAMPION LEAPER AND RIDER OF THE WORLD, SOLE PROPRIETOR." The ad stated that this was the eighth annual tour, and predicted that it would run for two years. Gran Circo Gardner ran a third advertisement later that month with: "EVERYTHING COMPLETELY NEW." Gardner was requesting a first class three brothers act and a lady



Bellotta Ducrow circa 1889.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection



Nellie Ryland, 1894.

Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library

iron jaw performer, lady coronet soloist, and lady specialty acts. He listed his address as: Frank A. Gardner, Office of Booth and Co., 201 Centre Street, New York. Business manager, David Traitel, and Harry Kennedy's Theatre Company of New York joined the Gardner circus June 10.

Gran Circo Gardner sailed on June 10 for Colon, "where they take the rail for Panama, thence by steamer to Guayaquil, Ecuador, their first stand. The roster is large for a trip of this sort," said the *Clipper*:

Frank A. Gardner	Mildred Gardner
William Marks	Josie Marks
Harry Carey	Mlle. Marietta
Louis Leslie	Kitty Leslie
Emily Zola	French Family
Arthur Nelson	Birdie Nelson
Mamie Blayila	Frank Long
Will Karl	Martinetta Brothers
Marvel Trio	Fred Romaldo
David Traitel	

Kitty Leslie and the Three Martinetta Brothers were both musical specialty artists.

It was later reported that the "Original Ducrow Four", aerialists and equestrians, had been reengaged for the fifth season with the Gardner circus. In June, Frank Gardner made his wife a present of "the celebrated jumping horse, Salisbury." In August the Gardner circus consolidated with the Murray & Ducrow Circus and the Quiroz and Williams show for the South America tour. Elena Jeal returned to New York after their circus had closed in Chile, and left to rejoin the Frank Gardner Circus "after a fortnight's rest." The roster of the Frank A. Gardner Circus in August at Kingston, Jamaica was slightly different than had been reported in June:

Nellie Ryland	Master Romeo Ducrow
Manvel Brothers	Ducrow Brothers
Josie Marks	Louis Leslie
Harry Carey	Linda Jeal
Harry French	James Murray
Frank Long	Mildred Gardner
William Marks	Bellotta Ducrow ³⁶

The Gardner show arrived at Bridgetown, Barbados, West Indies from Jamaica in August, and Linda Jeal married the clown, James Murray, at Puerto Cabello. At Valencia and Portobelo, it was reported, business was great. The show went from La Guairá, Venezuela to Caracas November 13. At Caracas the Schrica (Quiroz and Williams?) show left the Gardner circus and went overland to Valencia and Puerto Cabello. The roster of the Gardner show was again somewhat different than reported previously:

Frank Gardner	Mildred Gardner
Linda Jeal	Elena Ryland
Nellie Ryland	Bellotta Ducrow
Millie French	Lollie French
Mlle. Lulu	Dan Ducrow
Louis Leslie	Harry Carey
Frank Long	Harry French
Will Karl	Fred Gardner
George French	Louie Ducrow
Master Romeo Ducrow	James Murray
Alfred Smith	Jose Mendez
David Traitel	Prof. Griffith

According to the *New York Dramatic News* article of 1891, the Gardner circus tour of 1890 had lasted one year and two months, and "commenced with the longest jump on record, from New York, across the Isthmus of Panama and then direct to Guayaquil, Ecuador. The show consisted of thirty-six artists, twenty-eight horses, ponies, etc., one 110 foot round top and a fifty foot middle piece, and the season was one of "immense profit." By January of 1891 the Gardner show had gone to Guatemala.



Linda Jeal, circa 1910.

Circus World Museum

Stickney and Donovan ran an ad requesting performers in June of 1890, Address Charles McCarty, care of Samuel Booth & Co., 201 Centre Street, N. Y. They were at Rio de Janeiro in August. Their roster as listed in November was:

Martinho Lowande,	Sr. Martinho Lowande, Jr.
Alexander Lowande	Oscar Lowande
Marietta Lowande Correia	Ella Wilson
John Correia	George Castor
Prof. Francis Luna	John Taylor
Eddie Bard	John Bonner
Emma Noble	Charles McCarty
William Davene	Lotta Davene
Aubrey Bros.	Jesse W. Foster
Maude Davis	Annie Davis
The Castelllos	Fannie Reitig
Prof. Cleary	William Snow
George White	Thomas Brown
Edward Lilly	Ephraim Ely
Washington Rose	Ben Liver

Rio de Janeiro had only recently undergone a political revolution, and the circus must have seemed a welcome distraction for the citizens. The three Castelllos had been de-

scribed with the Nickel Plate Circus in 1886 as "champion acrobats and gymnasts, whose astounding feats of strength and agility are almost beyond comprehension;" and Dave Castello was said to be "the most accomplished principal and hurricane hurdle rider in the universe."³⁷

1891

In February of 1891 the Frank A. Gardner Circus, Gran Circo Gardner, was in the Republic of Salvador. They opened in Guatemala on February 4, where they spent six weeks. From there they went to Costa Rica. The roster at that time included:

Mildred Gardner	Linda Jeal
Elena Ryland	Louis Ducrow
Nellie Ryland	Millie Relota
Frank A. Gardner	David Traitel
James Murray	Frank Long
William Karl	Dan Ducrow
Louise Ducrow	Harry Carey
Romeo Ducrow	Master Freddie Gardner
Jose Hernandez	Jose Mendez
Richard Smith	James Griffiths and band

WE ARE COMING WITH

MARTINHO LOWANDE

THE GREAT BRAZILIAN RIDER

P.T. BARNUM'S

NEW & GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH.

Martinho Lowande was on the Stickney & Donovan show in 1890.
The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

Costa Rica, the source of the legend of El Dorado, had been the source of much New World plunder for several centuries, but it was said that all traces of the mines were lost when the natives of the region were exterminated by the Spanish. One source reported that, "All Central American ports are unhealthy, but this of Matina is deadly for vomits, yellow fever, and the dangerous calenturas, peculiar to this coast, are continual visitors." Yet it was said that the country was second only to Salvador as the richest in Central America, with raw exports: coffee, India rubber, Brazil wood, mahogany, cedar, hides, indigo, and cocoa.³⁸ The Gardners returned to New York in February or March, possibly to process the adoption of a child.

In April, Frank and Mildred Gardner travelled from New York to Guatemala with four-year-old daughter, "Lula Les Gardner." The passport application dated April 14 was the first reference found to the adopted daughter, Lulu (or Lula). Lulu's birth mother was formerly the Gardner's housekeeper, from British Guiana. Lulu Gardner was repeatedly described as a "colored" performer although she must have had a very light complexion; so light, in fact, that she was later cast in the role of Snow White in the school play at Lincoln School in Wheeling, West Virginia. Frank's permanent address in 1891 was still listed as Galesburg, Illinois, although the Gardners were apparently residing in Wheeling later that decade. Gardner's circus continued at Salvador,

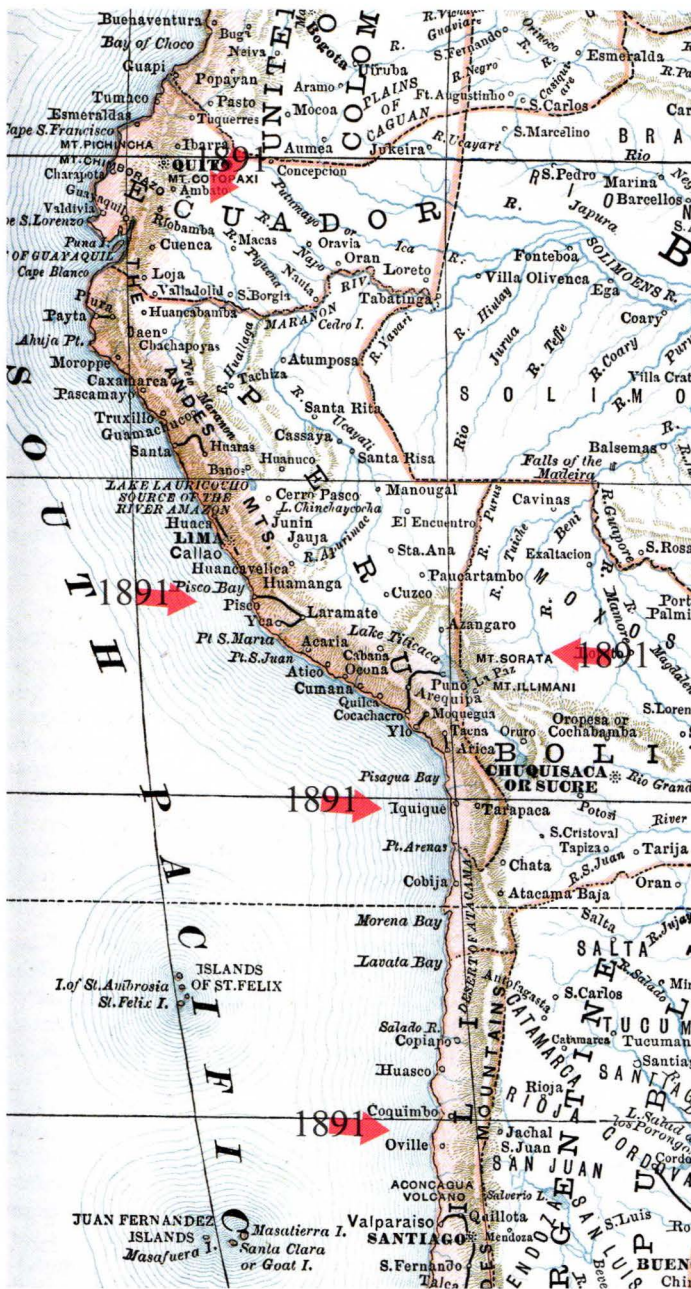
Guatemala; Nicaragua and San Jose until June, and moved on to Costa Rica. From there they planned to go to San Juan, Puerto Rico. Meanwhile, Gardner's agent, David Traitel, was in San Juan supervising the construction of an amphitheatre 125 feet in diameter.³⁹

Gardner and Traitel returned to New York from Costa Rica in June intending to scout the U.S. for talent for their next tour. Traitel would return to South America in September. They denied rumors of disease with the show and stated that by the next October they would assemble the biggest show yet. Bellotta and Louis Ducrow returned to New York on July 16, having spent three years touring with the Gardner circus.

In August Gardner and David Traitel returned to New York from the Midwest, praising the Ringling Brothers Circus which they had visited en route to New York. They had also visited Frank Long and his new partner, William Edwards, with the Robert Hunting Railroad Circus. Long and Edwards would join the Gardner show at Martinique on October 14. John Williams, Spanish clown and acrobat also planned to join the Gardner show; and W. C. Rolland would be leaving the Van Amburg circus to join Gardner "for a long engagement." Sturtevant tells us that the Spanish speaking clowns were often from North America: "even in the case of Spanish talking clowns, a few were performers who acquired the Spanish language... gained fame through-



Map of the 1891 route.



Map of the 1891 route.

out these Southern Republics as side-splitting jesters, even being preferred to the native joey.”

August 29, 1891 Frank Gardner advertised for talent for the ninth tour of South America. The ad requested “skirt dancers, a lady bareback rider with or without horse, two musicians who can play brass or string instruments, a boss canvas man, a boss chandelier man, a boss property man and a good groom,” also, “will buy a number of leaping hounds.” The business address was listed as “Frank A. Gardner, care of Elbogen & Co., agents, No. 32 East Fourth Street, New York.” Gardner’s final comment was: “Bicketts, please telegraph at once”. Gardner was apparently looking for a flying return trapeze act, but the Bicketts did not join the show that year. Instead, he would hire the Zamora Family.

By September Gardner had assembled his new show. The *Clipper* reported that they sailed for South America on September 21 or 23, though the *Wheeling Intelligencer* reported that they did not leave until October 4. The company included:

Frank A. Gardner
John La Salle
Manuel Piza
Frank L. Long
Willie Edwards
Ernest Dale
Harry Carey
Maria Rose
Psyche
May Livingston
The Zamora Family

David Traitel
William Brown
Jose Mendez
Johnnie Williams
Frank Edwards
James Edwards
Edith Craske
Mme. Inez Palmer
May Alpine
W. C. Rolland
Marie Antoine⁴⁰

John La Salle and William Brown were lithographers, Manuel Piza, ticket seller, and Jose Mendez was an assistant. Johnnie Williams was listed as a Spanish clown. Harry Carey was serving as equestrian director. Edith Craske, Maria Rose, Psyche, May Alpine, and May Livingston all presented dancing acts. Mme. Palmer was a snake charmer. The Zamora Family performed an aerial act and Marie Antoine was an iron jaw artist.

A troupe of performing stallions and leaping hounds that Gardner had purchased as well as several tumblers and leapers were also with the show. Sallie Marks, the wonderful equestrienne who had been with the Gardner show in 1890, died August 29 and was buried in La Paz, Bolivia.⁴¹

The Gardner show arrived in the West Indies early in September. Richard Foster, the Earle Sisters (trapeze artists), and the Royal Yeddow Japanese troupe would soon join the show. The *Clipper* reported in September that Josie Zamora, a gymnast from Chicago, would go with the Zamora family to join the Gardner show in South America. Mrs. Helga Stevens joined the Gardner circus along with Elena Jeal and Nellie Ryland. The *Clipper* reported in October that Ollie Grey had agreed to sign with the Frank Gardner show last year when she met Gardner in Eldorado. Frank complained that she kept his \$85 advance money and did not show up. Grey responded with a serious accusation against “a member of Mr. Gardner’s executive staff.” She said she was not paid the \$85 advance, but received less than \$40. She stated that the Gardner show could reclaim the loss through the things she left with the show—her trunks and wardrobe. Grey claimed that her reason for breaking her contract was due to some offence by one of Gardner’s people.

Harry Carey, clown, general performer and equestrian director with the Gardner show, died in September or October in South America. He had been born in Utica, New

York in 1853. Carey had travelled with the Donovan show in 1888, and had been with the Gardner show for the three years following that. The Frank A. Gardner Circus closed at Martinique on October 16 and sailed for Barbados the next day, playing a week before going on to play at the principal plaza at Caracas, Venezuela for six weeks. The roster at this point was heavy with dancing girls, apparently a favorite feature in this part of the world:

Frank A. Gardner	David Traitel
Manuel Piza	John La Salle
Harry Moreland	John Cullen
Edward Smith	David Jackson
Frank L. Long	Willie Edwards
Willie Rolland	Charles Edwards
Johnnie Williams	James Duval
Zamora Family	Mrs. Elena (Jeal) Stevens
Nellie Ryland	Mrs. Cora B. Gardner
Minnie Patterson	Millie Ottahe
Miss Anannie French	Edith Craske
May Livingston	Gussie Alpine
Lizzie Pierpont	Addie Noakes
Georgia Mayer	Ida Miller
Frankie Inman	Mlle. Rose
Arthur Barrett	

The roster included logistical men such as Harry Moreland, boss canvas man with ten assistants, John Cullen, chandelier man with four assistants, Edward Smith, property man with three assistants, and David Jackson, boss hostler with two assistants. Frank L. Long performed on the bar and aerial, Willie Edwards was a tumbler and leaper, and Willie Rolland was a rider. Charles Edwards performed as clown, tumbler and leaper and Johnnie Williams was a dialect clown. Duval was a contortionist, and the Mexican Zamora Family, Jose, Juan, and Claudis (identified as Juan, Jusefina and Cleofus in the *Washington Bee* April of 1890) performed as aerialists, tight rope walkers, perch and Mexican Ladders. Bareback riding was performed by Mrs. Elena (Jeal) Stevens and her daughter, Nellie Ryland. Mrs. Cora B. Gardner presented high school riding. Minnie (Fisher) Patterson was an aerialist and presented a hair slide act. Dancers included Millie Ottahe, Spanish dancer and cantatrice, Miss Anannie French, Edith Craske (transformation dancer), May Livingston, Gussie Alpine. Lizzie Pierpont, Addie Noakes, Georgia Mayer, Ida Miller, and Frankie Inman were billed as English Gaiety dancers. Arthur Barrett was the band master.

The Zamoras were lauded in various press announcements as "presenting the most daring lady aerial artist before the American public in the marvelous act entitled 'El triple trapezio'" and "the greatest of all aerial artists." The Zamoras would travel with the Gardner circus for several



Equestrienne Elena Ryland, circa 1890.

Circus World Museum

years, and were found working in the U.S. at least as late as 1913. The stock with the Gardner show consisted of twenty-two horses, ten ponies, and a troupe of performing stallions, dogs, monkeys, and snakes. The tent was a 120 foot round top with a 50 foot middle piece. They had new Gale lights, and a portable twenty-four foot square stage. David Traitel was offered management of a specialty company in the U. S. for the next season in October. Traitel's absence may have caused Gardner some inconvenience. He was replaced by Col. Jesse W. Foster.

Minnie Patterson, "aerialist and hair slide" performer would later become widely known in the profession under the name "Minnie Fisher," iron jaw performer and member of the Flying Fishers flying return act. In 1910 she related the following information to a reporter for the *Rome Daily Sentinel* concerning Frank Gardner's circus tour of 1891:

In 1891 Miss Fisher was on board a sailing vessel bound from Puerto Rico to Venezuela, as a



MINNIE FISHER, TRAPEZIST.

Minnie Fisher as she appeared in the 1897 Ringling Bros. route book. Author's collection

member of the Frank Gardner Circus. A big storm arose, the sails were blown away and for forty-eight hours the boat drifted helplessly. The food and water supply became exhausted, and all hands suffered much until they finally landed in La Guairá. Later the circus crossed the Isthmus of Panama and visited Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. The journey of the troupe over the Andes Mountains, on mules and llamas, and across Lake Titicaca, 12,645 feet above sea level, down into the city of La Paz, the capital of Bolivia, was, to say the least, mighty interesting.

"Crossing the Saltpeter district," said Miss Fisher, "we saw the corpses of many soldiers who had fought and died as the result of international struggles for the possession of the territory. The bodies seemed to be in a perfect state of preservation, although they had lain in the open for a long time. I suppose the saltpeter and atmospheric conditions acted as preservatives."

Bolivia had endured a revolution only the year before as the result of a class struggle. "The president has one immense advantage over General Comacho," Fannie B. Ward reported in July of 1890, "the latter is as poor as a church mouse, depending for funds upon friends nearly as poor as himself. Arce (the president) possesses a very large fortune, the mostly divided from his mines alone being sufficient to carry on the conflict..." Though the native peoples were described as peaceful, the "Cholos, or half-breeds" were "saucy and independent." According to Ward, the country was poised for revolt, "There is always a revolt somewhere, and schemes of assassination are frequent."

Although the Spanish had plundered Bolivia and Peru for centuries, La Paz, the capitol of Bolivia, still carried on a healthy mining trade. The area was sheltered and remote, nestled in a valley and surrounded by towering mountains. Indians carried snow ice down from the mountains in packs on the backs of llamas for the saloons and restaurants. All buildings depended solely on the sunlight for heat, for the people of the region had a superstitious prejudice against the use of artificial heating. Travelling even short distances in these countries was difficult, to say the least. A traveler named Frank G. Carpenter, in 1898, reported:

It took me five days to come to La Paz from the coast, a distance of 500 miles... In coming here I had to spend two days on the railroad before I was landed on the shores of Lake Titicaca. It took another day to cross the lake. I had to wait at Chililaya a day, and the fifth day was taken up in the stage ride, which landed me in La Paz... The most of Bolivia is accessible only on mules or on foot.

The natives of this region had for centuries endured conditions of virtual slavery by chewing erythroxylum cocoa leaves. The Aymara and Quichua Indians consumed enormous quantities of the stuff, it was said, while "their allowance of food is extremely small." The drug kept them "docile and respectful to the superior race," and they were described as patient and hard-working. This substance, called "cocaine," when refined to its purest form, was just beginning to be exploited as a local anesthetic, and its virtues were extolled as a virtual wonder drug, but the natives were literally addicted to it.

The Gardner show had not visited Chile since 1889, and that country was having its political troubles as well. Most likely these governments encouraged circus tours, providing a diversion from their internal turmoil, but there is no telling today what difficulties this may have posed for the Gardner circus in 1891, for Chile broke into revolution in the autumn of that year, and the United States government became embroiled in a controversy over the detention of a

shipment of arms aboard the steamship, *Itala*, intended for the insurgents. Newspapers predicted that the U. S. might declare war on Chile. One of the U. S. diplomats stated, "...you do not know these Chileans. Their bravado is something wonderfu—insane, I grant you, but nevertheless wonderful." An Indiana school teacher named Mrs. Edward Dodd who was teaching in an English college had this to say about the temperament of the people of Santiago: "The attitude of the country toward the United States is one of extreme hatred... After the *Itala* affair the Chileans became greatly incensed at our country and their hatred has been growing more and more bitter all the time." The hostilities did not last long and were soon forgotten. By 1898 correspondent Frank G. Carpenter was again extolling the virtues of Santiago with no mention of the conflict seven years before.

Meanwhile, Gardner's old partner, James Donovan had split up with Robert Stickney, Stickney taking a position as equestrian director with Rich Mettle's Ring Show in May. Donovan toured Bermuda for two months, returning to New York November 2. He planned to recruit performers to depart December 17 for a three months season. The roster included:

Josie Ashton	Mrs. Joe Wilton
Maude Livingstone	Emma Noble
Emma Rezac	The Sisters Fredericks
Tony Lowande and wife	Frank Ashton
Ed Bard	John Taylor
John Correia	Prof. Turner
Chris Livingstone	Ed Livingstone
Victor Livingstone	Charles Cordelia
Charles Dashaway	Joe Wilton and wife
Charles Cardello	Three Melville Brothers
Nettie Carline	Spader Johnson
Mrs. Spader Johnson	Master James Bishop
Daniel O'Brien	

Charles Cardello had been a partner of Harry Van Auken performing on stationary bars with Canary's American Consolidated Shows in 1883. James Melville and his son, Frank, were considered among the greatest horseback riders of the time. Spader Johnson, of the Ringling Brothers Circus, was one of the most popular clowns of the day. Johnson also rode in the Roman chariot races with the show. Chris and Maude Livingstone were described as "experts in hat spinning pastimes," and the Livingston brothers were identified as flying trapeze artists with the O. S. Carey and Company Circus in 1894.⁴²

1892

January 9, 1892 Gardner ran an ad in the *Clipper* for the

Circo Gardner Two Ring Circus requesting a three brother act, roller skating act, "a return flying trapeze act," riders, knock-about song and dance team, triple horizontal bars "with double somersault in fact," and "any act that can be done in a circus ring." Gardner's circus spent four weeks at Caracas, Venezuela playing to enormous crowds, then moved on to San Jose, Costa Rica, in Central America. The roster listed at this time was:

Frank A. Gardner	Mildred Gardner
Lulu Gardner	Elena (Jeal) Stevens
Nellie Ryland	Zamora Family
James Duval	Minnie Patterson
Willie C. Rolland	Millie Amie
Frank Long	Willie Edwards
May Livingston	John Williams
Psyche	Charles Edwards
George Gonsarlos	Henri Roger
John LaSalle	



Equestrienne Josie Ashton, circa 1886.

Circus World Museum

The show added five more musicians to the band, which was led by band leader, Francisco Vincente. John Williams served as principal clown. The feature of the show was said to be an equestrian monkey. This was the first reference to Gardner's monkey, Jesse (one report called Jesse a baboon), which was a favorite among crowds wherever the Gardner circus showed for the next five years.

An obituary appeared in the *Clipper* June 25 for "Henry Rolland Washington (Keys)." He was formerly one of the Rolland Brothers, trapeze artists, and was the advance agent for Gardner's circus at one time. In July Gardner's circus

By September of 1892 the North American newspapers were reporting that insurgents were closing in on the city of Caracas, and Venezuela was on the verge of revolution, but by then the Gardner circus had moved on. The Gardner circus played twenty-three shows in twenty days in La Paz, Bolivia. As mentioned earlier, the Gardner show could play the densely populated cities on the coast for extended periods of time without venturing into the interior. The entire roster at this point was listed as:

Frank A. Gardner	Jesse W. Foster
Louis Battiti	John Williams
The Zamora Family	William Edwards
Frank Long	James Duval



Members of the Zamora Family of aerialists.
The Ringling, Glasier Collection

passed from Central to South America. They were reportedly in Guayaquil, and would continue to Ecuador, Peru and Chili. The roster was essentially the same as before, excepting the addition of Gonsarlos and Roger who had not been listed previously. Miss Rehiche, danseuse, and a member of the Zamora Mexican Family returned to the States after breaking her arm doing a Roman Rings act. She cited problems with weather, travel and disease on the Gardner show. In Peru by September 10, the Gardner circus had a new 105 foot canvas with two 40 foot middle pieces. Col. Jesse Foster was the advance agent once again, having replaced David Traitel. The Zamora family was planning to return to the U.S. later. The show was to tour Bolivia and Chili for five or six more months.



Map of the 1892 route.

Mrs. Mildred Gardner	Minnie Patterson
May Livingston	La Nina
Lulu Gardner	Pedro Conberet
Paco Busto	Francisco Vincente

Willie Rolland, having lost his partner, Henry, with the stationary bars act, was now listed as a horseback rider. He would later become the equestrian director as well. The show included eight ring stock horses. Louis Battiti was the agent. William Edwards presented a pyramid of tables, Pedro Conberet was an acrobat, and Paco Busto was a second clown with the troupe. Vincente led a band of eight musicians. The “educated clown monkey,” Jesse, was again said to be “Gardner’s greatest feature.”

The company visited the grave of Sallie Marks, who had died here the year before. The Gardner show consolidated with Quires acrobatic show and Mr. Poisson’s cage of small lions.⁴³

1893

The *Clipper* reported in February that Duval, the contortionist, Edward Long, Minnie Patterson, Mrs. Stredams, and the Zamora Family closed with the Gardner Circus in

early 1893 and returned to New York, however it was said later in July that Duval was still working with the Gardner show, planning to return to New York shortly; and, as we will see, Minnie Patterson would soon have more adventures with the show. Jesse W. Foster was still working as Gardner’s advance man and Henry Grant was serving as the secretary of Gardner’s circus. The performers were essentially the same as before with the addition of Nellie Ryland, Jessie Campeon, and the Wallaces. Gardner’s American Circus arrived at Kingston, Jamaica July 23 adding Jules Periera, and the Nelson Family. Again, the *Clipper* reported, “Mr. Gardner’s monkey Jesse created quite a sensation with her riding and acrobatic acts” and “Mr. Gardner reports prosperous business durin(g) his two years’ sojourn in South America and the West Indies.” An advertisement ran in the *Clipper* in September for the Zamora Family: “TRIPLE TRAPEZE ARTISTS And Unequaled SPANISH WEB DESCENT.” They had returned to the U.S. after two years with Gran Circo Gardner in the West Indies, Central and South America. They claimed to be the “GREATEST GYMNASTIC NOVELTY EVER PRESENTED BEFORE AN AUDIENCE,” and the “LEADING TRAPEZE ARTISTS OF THE PRESENT AGE.” The Frank A. Gardner Circus was reportedly doing



Map of the 1893 route.

well in the Antilles the following month. Manager Jesse Foster had recruited Mlle. Jenness and her beautiful horse, Odin and his high school horse act; Mlle. Baretta, principal and jockey; and Prof. Mechan, trained dogs. Having lost the Zamora family, the Gardner show now anticipated adding the Bicketts and Hilliards, both flying return acts.

Apparently the *Clipper* was so used to receiving correspondence from the Gardner show that they found it noteworthy to report in November that no one had heard from the Frank A. Gardner circus for two months. They had been in Puerto Rico when last heard from. "Frank A. Gardner is the most successful of South American managers and is known as the Barnum of that country," the *Clipper* said. "His company is a large one, and his ring stock and trained animals and equipment excellent." At that time, J.W. Foster, his agent, was reportedly still in New York City. The Gardner show arrived in La Guairá from Puerto Rico that month, having completed a successful tour of "the Leeward Islands," the *Clipper* reported. Business continued very well in La Guairá.

The Gardner show split with the Nelson circus and combined with the New York Circus, under the management of Col. Jesse W. Foster at Caracas, Venezuela, where The Bicketts, aerialists, Louie Leslie, Mlle. Barretta and a troupe of educated dogs had joined the show. Foster was apparently not in the employ of the Gardner show at this time, but was booking acts independently while still in Caracas. Foster remained at the Allman Hotel booking people for the show. The Three Zolas, aerialists and Spanish dancers (also called the "Electric Meteors") sailed from New York on November 25 to join the show. Avery and King, combination double trapeze and ring act (sometimes performing a ceiling walking act as well) signed on with the Gardner show for three months in Cuba, and sailed from New York November 25. When Col. Jesse W. Foster arrived at Puerto Cabello, Venezuela with his company of performers from the New York Circus, the combined company roster ran as follows:

The Three Millettes	The Three Zolas
Avery and King	Mlle. Jenness
Pauline Carre	Richard A. Foster
James Hubbard	Frank Gardner
Mildred Gardner	Little Lulu Gardner
William Rolland	John Williams
Frank Naska	Julio Periera

The Three Millettes was an acrobatic troupe consisting of Albert Millette, Harry Harrison, and Eddie Howard. Frank, Emily, and Winnie Zola also performed an acrobatic act as the Three Zolas. William Avery and Lizzie King performed a double trapeze act. Mlle. Jenness was a bounding jockey, James Hubbard a musician, and Julio Periera a Spanish clown. Continuing with the show, Willie Rolland was the principal rider, John Williams a clown and leaper, and

Frank Naska performed contortion. The circus also included Gardner's own band, eight ring stock, trained ponies, and a troupe of dogs, a den of snakes, and the monkey, Jesse.

Lulu Gardner, performing on trapeze and Spanish web, was said to be "a little colored girl who is bound to them by her mother, a negress servant, of Demerara." This report dramatically conflicts with the *New York Dramatic News* article of August 15, 1891, which had stated that Frank and Cora were Lulu's natural parents. The *Dramatic News* article had gone on to say that Lulu was born May 9, 1887 in Santiago, Chile. The Gardner show opened in the bull ring, Plaza de Toros in Valencia December 8. It was reported that Minnie Patterson, flying rings and snake charmer, closed with the Gardner show and returned to the U.S. November 30. This was not the complete story, however, for Minnie continued with the Nelson show when they split off from the Gardner circus.

Meanwhile, Gardner's former partner, James Donovan, was in New York in August recruiting people for his show.⁴⁴

1894

The John Nelson show roster, at Puerto Cabello, Venezuela en route to Panama and Chile early in 1894 ran as follows:

Senorita Rainetta	Robert Nelson
John Nelson	Annie Nelson
Victoria Nelson	Alda Nelson
baby Nelson	Juan Gomez
Prof. Salvini	Edourda Galvey
St. Domingo	

John Nelson and family performed acrobatics, Senorita Rainetta was the principal bareback hurdle rider, Juan Gomez was an aerialist and scenic rider, and Edourda Galvey performed as a clown. Robert Nelson was billed as a Spanish clown and tumbler and St. Domingo led an excellent brass band.

In January it was reported that Kate Nelson, while riding at Tegucigalpa, Honduras, fell while doing a somersault, struck her head on the ground, and broke her neck, dying instantly. But by this time the Nelson show had broken up. Minnie Patterson's account recalled:

Miss Fisher went on to tell about a subsequent trip to South America with a circus of which John Nelson, an Englishman, was proprietor. In Columbia business was bad because of the failure of the coffee crop, and the show became stranded at Bogota. Miss Fisher had several thousand dollars which she had saved and foolishly invested her money in the show, succeeding Nelson as the owner. Business did not improve, the enterprise again "went broke." Miss Fisher sold her diamonds



Map of the 1894 route.

for \$1,600 and divided all but \$50 among the employs [sic] on account of back salaries. Accompanied by an Indian and his wife she set out over the mountains on a four days' journey to Cartagena, the principal seaport. Arriving there she paid her Indian companions and was left practically penniless, until she secured an engagement to do the "slide for life act" on Sundays, at \$250 per slide in connection with a bull fighting entertainment.

After three months in Cartagena, Miss Fisher

sailed for New York, but stopped at Santiago, Cuba, and joined a circus. The Spanish-American War broke out, the circus went to pieces, Miss Fisher's funds became exhausted and she nearly starved. Finally at Havana, she received money from home and, through courtesies Gen. Fitzhugh Lee got safely away from the turbulent island. She landed in New York on an extremely cold January day, clad in a flimsy summer dress and white leghorn hat.

Minnie's trek over the Andes, seventy miles straight over the mountains to the coastal city of Honda, sounds very much like a description published in the *Salt Lake Herald* March 23, 1890; "Indians will walk for three days, men and women together, having upon their backs heavy loads of produce or long strings of fish." It is unlikely that Minnie walked the distance on her own steam, however. The article states that the natives used a device called a "sillas," a chair strapped to their backs on which they carried passengers across the mountains. As heavy as this burden might have been, it was little compared to the 250 pound bundles they regularly carried to the city of Bogota. Since there was no railway or other public transportation, and, since the average North American traveler was not accustomed to the exertion required from the thin atmosphere of 8,750 foot altitude, travelers from North America often used this conveyance. The extraordinary effort required of those from lower elevations was not due to a lack of physical conditioning, however. It was caused by the lack of an abundance of red blood cells that carry oxygen through the body, and it usually took a person about six months to acclimate themselves to the rarefied oxygen levels. Correspondent and world traveler, Fannie B. Ward stated in 1890, "... the trip (over the mountains) necessitates four of the longest and hardest days that are likely to fall to the lot of an ordinary human being in the course of his life."

Contemporary accounts of Bogota describe a nearly ideal city, but, unlike Caracas, it was 700 miles from the sea. Every item in the city weighing over 250 pounds, including the city street cars, had to be disassembled and ported piece-by-piece across the mountains on the backs of donkeys or by the native laborers. The following year, 1895, Great Britain, ever the economic manipulator during the colonial period, would become embroiled in a corruption controversy with allegations that the Minister, George Jenner was involved in bribing officials to obtain contracts for railroad construction. It was said that there was "intense feeling against him" in Bogota, but possibly not against the North Americans.⁴⁵ At any rate, anecdotes such as these underscore the extreme instability and perilous conditions under which these shows travelled throughout Central and South America, yet one might assume that to a certain extent the character of the average circus performer seeks such sensational developments as these.

In March of 1894 the *Clipper* received a letter from people who had signed with the Gardner circus in South America "in which the performers wish to deny that they

have been engaged with Jesse W. Foster's New York Circus." The letter read, "We were engaged by Jesse W. Foster, who was acting as agent at the time for F. A. Gardner's South American Circus, but he was discharged by Mr. Gardner soon after his arrival in Venezuela. We arrived on December 15, and opened on that date with the F. A. Gardner Show to immense business." The people who had joined the Gardner show were:

Avery and King	The Three Millette Brothers
Eddie Howard	Albert Millette
Harry E. Harrison	Pauline Carre
Mlle. Jenness	F. M. Zola
Emily Zola	Winnie Zola

The remaining people of the old company were:

William C. Rolland	Julio Periera
Frank Naska	Ramon Rey
Mr. Lucier	Thomas Thompson
L. Sanchos	Henry Colston
C. Brady	

In the month of May the Gardner show had been touring continually for almost three years in the tropics. They had shown in "almost every portion of South America, the West Indies, and Central America." The country had been hit by a depression caused by "the late silver question," but business was reportedly good. This may have been one of many exaggerations that the show relayed to the press over the years, for when he died his obituaries stated that Frank Gardner had earned and lost several fortunes in his lifetime.

John Williams, clown with the show, closed in Trinidad. Raymond Rey, the Spanish agent left for France for a short vacation. Little Lulu Gardner had introduced a new act consisting of rings, loopwalking, and trapeze "which would do credit to a much older gymnast." Gardner's monkey, Jesse, was doing a somersault bareback act. The Millette acrobatic act was said to be a sensation. The Zola Family, Avery and King, Naska (contortionist) and Pervaiera (possibly Julio Periera mentioned above, Spanish clown), were also very popular. Equestrian director, William Rolland, had been breaking animals, supervising the dressing room and riding in several acts. Count de Bethercourt, sharpshooter, and Mme. Angeli Verdi, juggler, joined in Barbados on April 28. The show was using a new canvas in Para, Brazil, where they opened May 10 for six weeks. The season anticipated closing about July 15 in Martinique, West Indies. Jesse W. Foster left the show at this time. He would next be found working for Gardner's former partner, James Donovan, once again.

In Caracas in July, the *Clipper* reported that "little Lulu Gardner", was causing a sensation, and her aerial acts, had "seldom been equaled." Gardner's "twin monkeys, Jesse and

Minnie, in hurdle, bounding jockey, and the greatest of all great animal acts, a two horse carrying act, are the feature." Everyone was reported in high spirits due to "the rumor of Col. Jess Foster's rejoining, as that always means a big boom in business." The rumor would prove to be false. It was reported that the great wire walking prodigy, Eddie Rivers (El Nino Eddie) was also with the show, yet Rivers was not listed in subsequent reports.

The *Clipper* reported in October that the Gardner show had been doing "immense" business in Brazil since opening May 13. This was probably their first time showing in Brazil, although it was the largest country in the continent, even larger than the contiguous United States. The reason for this is probably because of the language barrier, since the official language of Brazil is Portuguese. They had opened in Para in the Circo Theatro Cosmopolitan to a sell-out crowd, had played there for two weeks at high prices before moving to the Plaza under a new canvas for six more weeks at reduced prices. Following this they made a rare voyage up the Amazon River 1,000 miles to Manáos, at the heart of the rubber country. Trips into the interior were difficult, and on this occasion business there was poor. The show might have lost money if the Brazilian government had not granted them a "concession." The price and the demand for rubber had multiplied in a few short years, and governments of the United States and Brazil both had an interest in developing the region. With a population of about 5,000 (one source reported a population of 8,000); Manáos was situated near the confluence of the Amazon, the Madeira and the Rio Negro Rivers; and was becoming an important trade center for rubber, balsam, vegetable drugs, and tonca beans. The atmosphere in this tropical region would likewise be challenging compared to the higher altitudes. It was said that the mosquitoes and flies swarmed the area in the millions.

The Gardner show played at Maranhao and Ceara, which were said to be "good show towns," and opened at Pernambuco September 12 to a full house every day for two weeks. There they "encountered opposition" from the Silva and Son's Show, but without much competition. At this point Frank Gardner was reportedly still doing his bounding jockey act "in fine form" (although the *New York Dramatic News* reported August 15, 1891 that Gardner "has not played an engagement since 1888"). Gardner was then 36 years old. The Millette Brothers' great acrobatic act was the biggest feature of the show, Harry Harrison did layout somersaults leaping, and Mildred Gardner did her high school horse act with her Kentucky thoroughbred horse, Wonder. Avery and King returned to New York on September 21. New additions included:

Senorita Georgene Laurenci	Senorita Helena Laurenci
Senor Laurenci	Master Antonio Di Silva
Senorita Di Silva	Macesenta

Senor Laurenci was billed as a clown. Georgene Laurenci, bare back principal act, and Helena Laurenci, jockey and carrying act, may have been the Laurence Sisters. The Sisters Laurence, well known on the stage as contortionists and song and dance artists, were reportedly very popular. The Di Silvas performed as acrobats, and Macesenta was a clown.

Next the Gardner circus planned to go to Chile by way of Buenos Aires, to Mendoza, crossing the Andes Mountains to Santiago, where they anticipated opening January 15. This would likely have been a difficult overland journey, yet it was the preferred method of travel compared to the hazardous voyage around Cape Horn.

James Donovan had nearly completed assembling his New Great American Circus Company early in November of 1894, and planned to sail to South America November 7 with Jesse W. Foster as his general manager and director. Those already contracted were:



3 Millette Bros., circa 1890.

Author's collection

Edward Nelson	Mrs. Julia Nelson
Alfredo Nelson	Alex Schaffer
Mrs. Schaffer	Rosina Venus
Mable Reed	Annie Carroll
Mlle. Emma Rezac	Linda Wells
Birdie Gray	Annie Olsen
James Donovan	Mrs. Donovan
James Donovan, Jr.	William Ducrow
Daniel Ducrow	Salmonski Bush
Allen Morgan	

Rosina Venus, said to be from Circus Rentz, in Berlin, was the only woman, it was said, who could turn a somersault from feet to feet on the high wire. Allen Morgan led a silver band of eight musicians. The show also included Turkisimo's Royal Oriental Japanese Troupe, including Saranaka and Suetta Kline. It carried six horses, trained stallions, four ponies, riding goats, dogs and monkeys, a den of serpents, and educated birds.

"The outfit included a three-centre-pole tent, seats for 8,000 people and 500 chairs for reserved seats and boxes. Bill poster Al Jones had already left October 25 with "hand-some all lithograph pictorial printing."

Late in December the Three Millette Brothers (Albert Millette, H. Harrison, and Eddie Howard), advertised that they had been "for the past year the FEATURE ACT of the CIRCO GARDNER." They went on to say that the six month engagement at the Theatre Martine in Buenos Aires had been postponed because of quarantine law, so they were now free for business. What is more, there had been a failed insurrection in February at Rio de Janeiro late in 1893 and early in 1894, and the U. S. warships had been instrumental in the defeat of the revolutionaries. Yet later that year the *Clipper* reported that seven circuses were playing in Rio de Janeiro, and the reporter stated that the country of Brazil was obviously "well supplied with circuses." Frank Brown's English Circus was said to be "the most important" show in the country. They finished a two month engagement at Teatro San Pedro with a "water carnival pantomime." Frank Gardner's Circus was reportedly at the same theatre, opening November 23, and the following March the two shows would merge into one. The Millette Brothers were with the show but would now go with Brown's Circus for six months in Buenos Aires. Thieves at the Hotel National stole a diamond ring and pin from Harry Harrison and a diamond stud from Frank Gardner valued at \$400. The last of the company who had joined the show in November left for New York December 19. Business had fallen off because of hot weather, and Gardner was planning to close the show and return to New York to organize a new company.⁴⁶

1895

By February Donovan's South American Circus had

reached Cuba as well. At Puerto Principe and Santiago business was reportedly very good. Mlle. Rezac and Julia Nelson were the biggest hits of the show. Rosina Venus and little Alfredo Nelson were very popular. Jesse W. Foster was still serving as the general manager, but would soon return to New York City to recruit people to replace the Edward Nelson Family, who had been contracted to work for the Barnum and Bailey Circus that season. The present roster included:

James Donovan	Jesse W. Foster
William Ducrow	Alex Schaffer
M. Louis Brown	Victor Vidella
Louis Wilson	James Vidella
Edward Nelson	Master Alfredo Nelson
Juan Laredo	Emil Damasco
Airian Baredo	Laurillo Puerto
Mlle. Emma Rezac	Mrs. James Donovan
Master James Donovan	Rosina Venus
Julia Nelson	Fannie Cannell
Mrs. Alex Schaffer	Mrs. Edward Nelson

The Vidella brothers were probably horizontal bar artists. One of them had been working as "Vidella and Dunbar," horizontal bar "experts" at the New Olympic Theatre in St. Paul, Minnesota in August of 1890. The show had a band of nine musicians, and carried horses, ponies, goats, dogs, monkeys, mules and Kalomas. Later that month, Jesse Foster completed the construction of an amphitheater in Cienfuegos, Cuba for the Donovan show that would hold nearly 5,000 people. Mlle. Rezac and Rosina Venus were said to be very popular features. The show had added two Spanish clowns, and Minnie Patterson. The Nelson family expected to finish with the show in about two weeks. Donovan anticipated forming an entirely new show on about March first. The entire show celebrated James Donovan's birthday January 25. They were still in Matanzas, Cuba in late April or early May. Mr. Williams and Mr. La Strange had joined and were making balloon ascensions with the show. The company anticipated going to Key West and Tampa, closing about May 5 to reorganize.

By May 11 Jesse Foster had reached New York to prepare for the next season, and performer Richard Lewis and his mule would return April 20. But when he returned in May, Foster would not be with the Donovan show. As mentioned earlier, Minnie Patterson later stated that she had joined a circus in Cuba that "went to pieces" when the Spanish American War broke out. This must have been the Donovan show of 1895, since that was the last year that Minnie was working there. The conflict between the U.S. and Spain continued in Cuba for some years before the Spanish American War actually broke out in 1898.



Map of the 1895 route.

Touring Brazil, Gardner's circus had just closed two months "big business" at the Theatro São Pedro in Rio de Janeiro. The Gardner circus merged with Frank Brown's Company in March, and added a number of people to their roster:

Atlanta	Miss Palmyra
La Place Brothers	William Ware
Edward Flexmore	Mr. Harton
Max Lehman	

Miss Palmyra was billed as the principal and hurdle act and William Ware was a jockey rider. The La Place Brothers performed as clowns and acrobats, Edward Flexmore as a clown, Mr. Harton was a musical performer, and Max Lehman performed feats of strength.

The Gardner circus correspondent reported that "Our old company includes Mr. and Mrs. Gardner; Lulu Gardner,



Nelson Family of acrobats circa 1889.

Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library

trapezist and Spanish web performer; F. Naska, contortionist; Joe Mendes and William C. Rolland. The monkey Jesse is still one of the features of the show." On February 28 they went to Para, at the mouth of the Amazon River for a return date, and then planned to take "our usual tour of the West Indies." Surprisingly, they reported that there had been no illness in the company since the show had started out three years before. In mid-May Gardner's Circus was in Caracas planning to continue the season for some time. Equestrian director, William Rolland was still with them, and the monkey, Jesse, was still reportedly very popular. Col. Jesse Foster, having left Frank Gardner's Circus two years previously, now planned to rejoin the show May 25 from the Donovan circus, which had run into trouble in Cuba. Foster had a new company of performers which he had recruited in New York. By June, Circo Gardner had traveled north to Venezuela playing every principal town along the Grand Central Railway. The roster included:

Frank A. Gardner	Jesse W. Foster
William Rolland	William Ware
Frank Naska	Harry La Place
Celeste Harton	Tony La Place
Edward Flexmore	Max Lehman
Mr. Peplao	Mrs. Frank A. Gardner
Senorita Palmyra	Lulu Gardner

Senorita Alalauta
Catherine Harton
Louis Restel
Charles Apt
George Meyer
Prof. Montaigne

Eleana Flexmore
Belle Lemoine
Joe Kingston
Edward Phelps
Peter Osgood

Frank A. Gardner was still billed as a bounding jockey and leaper. Col. Jesse W. Foster was the general agent and representative. William Rolland was the principal and four horse rider as well as equestrian director. Other equestrian acts included William Ware, an English bounding jockey, Mrs. Frank A. Gardner's high school ménage act, with her dancing horse, Wonder, and Senorita Palmyra as a principal and two-horse carrying act. Senor Naska performed as trick contortionist and Max Lehman as a cannon ball and heavy weight manipulator. Clowns and comics included Harry La Place, Celeste Harton, Tony La Place, Edward Flexmore, and Belle Lemoine. Mr. Peplao, the Spanish ring master was "late of Livingston's Co." Lulu Gardner performed on flying rings and trapeze, Senorita Alalauta on high wire and balancing acts, Eleana Flexmore as pantomimist and danseuse, and Catherine Harton as a snake charmer. Among the other personnel were Louis Restel, assistant agent; Joe Kingston, treasurer; Charles Apt, boss canvas man; Edward Phelps, stock manager; George Meyer and two assistants, properties; and Peter Osgood, lights. Prof. Montaigne led a brass band of nine musicians. The show also included nine horses, fifteen dogs, twenty snakes, trick donkey and the monkey, Jesse.

Performers who had been with the failed Livingston Pantomime and Specialty Company joined the Frank A. Gardner Circus at Puerto Cabello, Venezuela. They were:

Bert Hall	Teddy English
George W. La Rosa	Edward Flossie
Emil Barnell	

Gardner's circus, at Dutch Guiana, South America, held a benefit July 31 for little Lulu Gardner. Those performing were:

Frank A. Gardner	Mildred Gardner
Edward Barnell	Flossie Barnell
Little Aunet Barnell	Edward Flexmore,
Helene Flexmore	George La Rose
Harry La Place	Auger La Place
William Ware	Frank Naska
Max Lehman	Celeste Harton
Eleana Harton	Jesse Foster

James Donovan, having left Cuba, arrived in New York

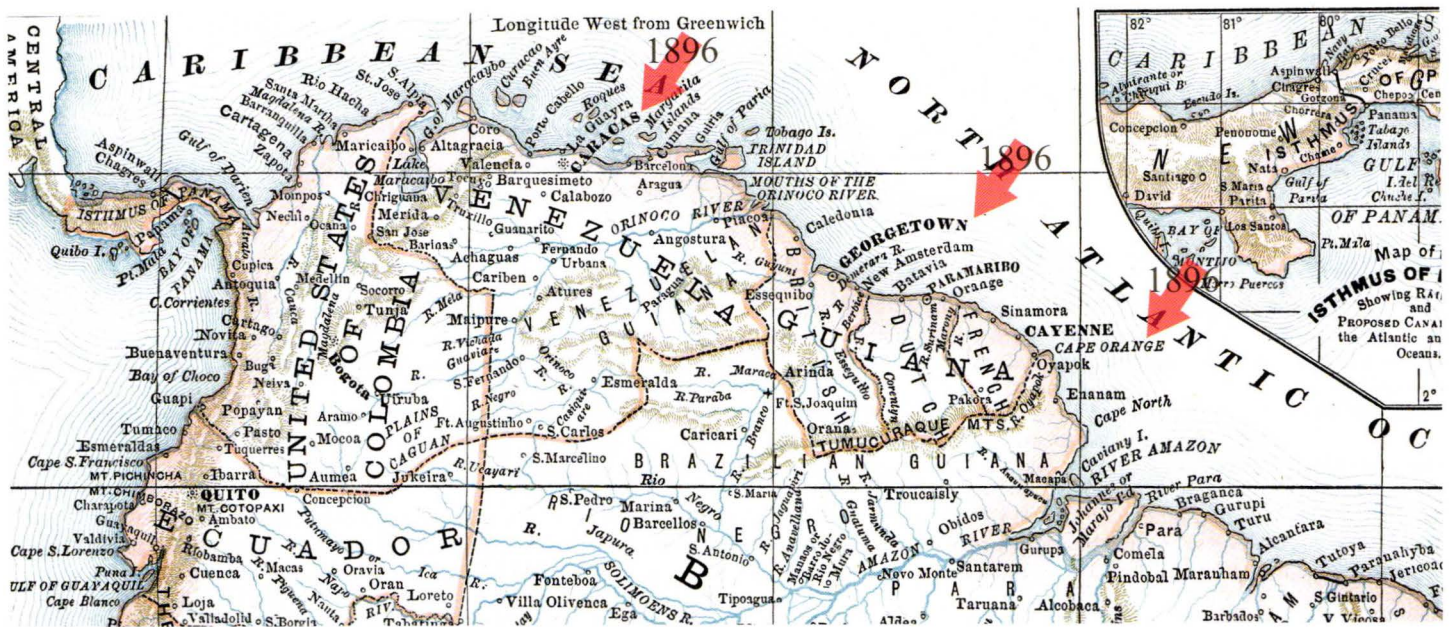
August 1. By December Donovan would already be planning another trip to South America from New York with his wife and two children, James Jr. and Viola.

It was reported that Col. Jesse Foster had bought a farm outside Atlantic City, N. J. in December, intending to make it his summer home.⁴⁷

1896

The following month saw the new year in with Frank A. Gardner's English Circus in the Lesser Antilles islands east of Santo Domingo. Lulu Moran, the "little colored apprentice, is still the feature of the show," the *Clipper* reported, "and is creating a sensation among the negroes as their Colored Princess of the Air." In early January Frank advertised for a: "bareback hurdle rider, tumbler and principal leaper." In March Gardner was still advertising for talent. He was due to arrive in New York within a week to recruit a whole new company of performers. His latest ad requested: "Wanted at Once, All First Class Talent, FOR FRANK A. GARDNER'S SOUTH AMERICAN CIRCUS, TO INAUGURATE THE NEW Circo Metropolitano In CARACAS, REPUBLICA DE VENEZUELA, FOR WHICH I HAVE THE EXCLUSIVE PRIVILEGE, UNDER THE DISTINGUISHED PATRONAGE OF THE GOVERNMENT, Lady Riders, Bar Team, Flying Act." The ad requested riders with or without horses and performers of all types doing two or more acts "not depending on the English language." He also wanted performing horses, "or will buy them," and "Also, KNOCKABOUT, BLACK FACE ACROBATIC SONG AND DANCE TEAM." The general business agent was Ramon Rey Lucero, who would be in New York on or about March 20, and leave for Venezuela April 20.

Frank, Mildred, Lulu Gardner, and the monkey, Jesse, arrived in New York from St. Thomas Island, off the coast of Puerto Rico, aboard the ship *Caribbee* late in March "after an absence of nearly five years in South America where he has made a fortune in the circus business." Gardner's occupation was described as "Circus owner," Mildred's occupation was listed as "none." Apparently Mildred had quit performing by that time. Frank's age was recorded as 46 years, Mildred's age was 40, and Lulu was 8, consistent with Lulu's birth date of 1887 as reported in the *New York Dramatic News* article of 1891. No other circus people were listed arriving with them at this time. The *Clipper* reported that Gardner might give a performance with the monkey, Jesse, for the opening of the Barnum and Bailey Circus at Madison Square Garden, giving the city "the opportunity to see this intelligent and educated animal." Frank had set up a temporary office in New York engaging performers for his new show, commencing at the New Circo Metropolitano in Caracas. The Gardner show company planned to sail on about April 20 with Col. Foster, "who has been with him for the past eight years," as his advance man. This, of course, did



Map of the 1896 route.

D.W. STONE'S
GRAND CIRCUS AND MUSICAL BRIGADE.

ROBERT STICKNEY.
EQUESTRIAN.

Robert Stickney was one of the premiere equestrians of his day.
 The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

not account for Foster's absence of two years with the James Donovan circus.

An ad ran in the *Clipper* April 4, 1896: "FRANK A. GARDNER NOW HERE ENGAGING ARTISTS To Inaugurate the New Circo Metropolitano, CARACAS, VENEZUELA, OPENING ON OR ABOUT May 1, 1896, LEAVES, PER STEAMER, APRIL 24, CAN BE SEEN PERSONALLY AT, OR ADDRESSED BY LETTER, FRANK A. GARDNER, Tony Smith's Agency, 154 4th Ave., N. Y. Would buy set seats, Address as above". The Gardner show anticipated leaving for Caracas, Venezuela aboard Red 'D' Line steamer, *Philadelphia* with the first section of the New American Circus with "a large number of horses, ponies, mules, donkeys, dogs, monkeys, etc." The roster of performers so far included:

The Eddy Trio	Silvern and Emerie
The Gillettes	Emma Stickney
Robert Stickney	Tote Ducrow
Anna Dare	The Three Dorrs
John Purvis	Louis Ducrow
Bellotta Ducrow	Edward Flexmore
Harry La Place	Tony La Place
Madam Helene	Irene Olsen
Minnie Turner	Munson and Le Roy
Carrie May	Bert Hall
John Rogers	Milliken Sisters
Alice and Maude	Mrs. Frank A. Gardner
Lulu Gardner	

Acrobatic acts included The Eddy Trio and Silvern and Emerie. The five Gillettes performed on bicycles and Anna Dare was a contortionist. Mlle. Emma (Rezac) Stickney and her husband Robert Stickney each performed as bareback riders. Louis and Bellotta Ducrow presented their trapeze

act. Other acts included the Three Dorrs and their ponies and John Purvis and his donkeys. Tote "Du Crow," Harry La Place, and Tony La Place all performed as clowns.

Ramon Rey Lucero, Gardner's Spanish agent, sailed April 4 for Venezuela. Col. Jesse Foster was assisting with all arrangements. The company expected to sail April 24 (it was later reported that they set sail April 25) with other performers sailing May 4 and 14. Before sailing south, Gardner went to Chicago for the opening of the Ringling Brothers Circus. There he engaged the Earle Sisters (Maude, Hazel, Lola, and Gypsie) aerial act to play in South America. His ad requested response from lady principal and male somersault riders with their stock preferred.

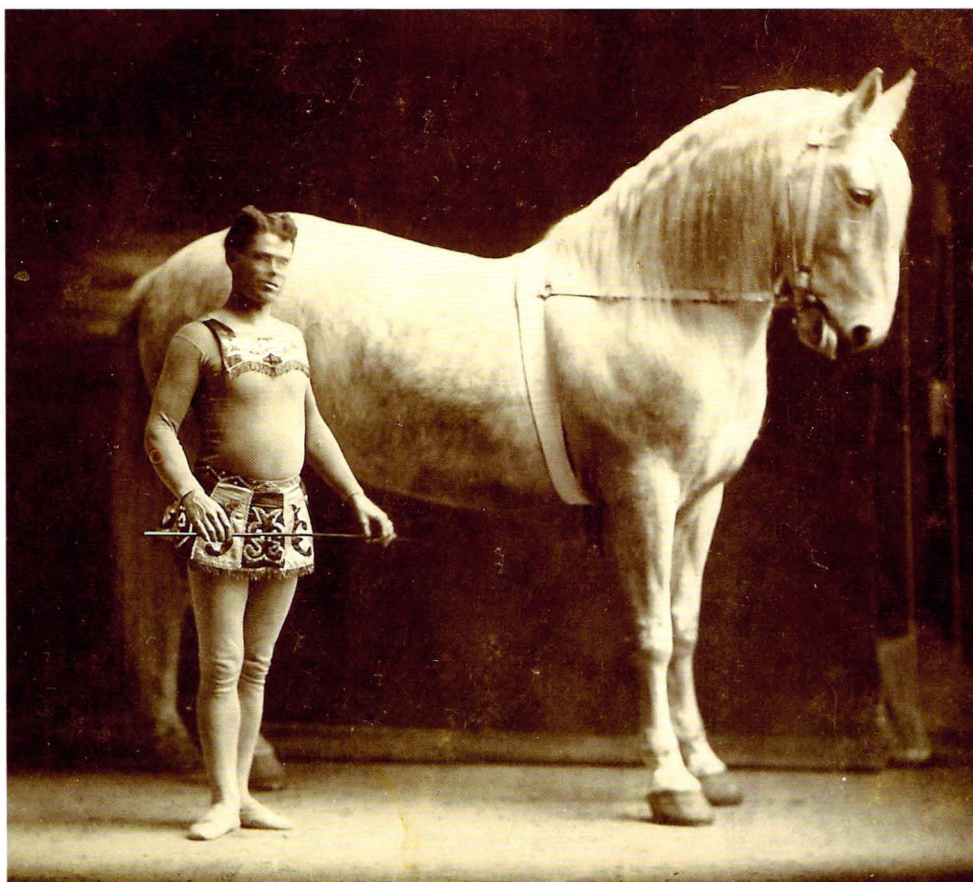
In April the report was repeated that Gardner's new show would inaugurate the new Iron Circo Metropolitano at Caracas. The roster of performers had expanded since the previous month:

Frank A. Gardner
Lulu Gardner
Hazel Earle
Gypsie Earle
M. Gillette
George Gillette
Anna Dare
Bellotta Ducrow
Louis Ducrow
W. C. Murphy
Harry Moulton
El Payaso Todito
George Girdella
Fanny Girdella
Thomas Girdella
Ed Hocum
Harry Wallace
Daisy Wallace
William Dorr
Allie Dorr
Robert Stickney
Emma Stickney
Richard Louis
John Purvis
Bert Hall
Fred Hester
William Walsh
George Monroe
Peter Olson

Mildred Gardner
Maude Earle
Lola Earle
Annie Sylvester
Harry Gillette
Otto Gillette
William Eddy

teen horse and ponies as well as Gardner's monkey, Jesse. Gardner and 43 performers, including new recruits, Nellie DeVere, William Ware, Prince Pharaoh, and John Saunders, departed April 25 for Caracas. Col. Foster postponed his departure until May 25 with the second company of the show. A new member of the show was recruited the following week; a lady trick bicyclist named Annie Sylvester.

The new Circo Metropolitano construction was dedicated May 7, and over 4,000 patrons filled the "beautiful iron structure." Caracas, it was said, was called "the Paris of the Spanish Main." The favorites, Col. Foster stated in his letter to the *Clipper* May 23, were the Eddy Trio; the Gillettes; Edward Flexmore; Tote Ducrow; Mlle. Emerie, assisted by Mons. Silvern (they were sometimes said to be French, and sometimes called Australians), performing trapeze, Spanish Webb and horizontal bars; Emma Stickney; the Earle Sisters; Dorr and his ponies; Little Lulu Gardner; and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Gardner. Gardner's circus left Caracas for the interior about June 15 after a successful season in that city. He had engaged two more acts to boost the performance at the capital, the Girdellas and Annie Sylvester, and they were expected to return to the U.S. soon. Col. Foster was reportedly purchasing equipment for a great water carnival which Gardner would produce in South America. Whether or not this show was ever produced under any management is not known.



Ed Hocum, circa 1900.

Circus World Museum

Ramon Rey, advertising agent, would go in advance of the show. Col. Jesse Foster planned to sail about May 15 "with the performers, new outfit, etc.," which included fif-

Jesse Foster arrived at the Gardner show with new people and a new outfit on June 21. The *Clipper* reported in July that they were doing the best business they had ever done at the new Circo Metropolitano. The season was coming to a close and many of the people were returning home. Emma Stickney was doing her bareback principal and jockey acts, the Earle sisters and Maude Earle's two horse carrying act and hurdle act were also a big hit. The Governor of Caracas presented Hazel Earle with a diamond studded bracelet. The company consisted of:

The Eddy Trio	Silvern and Emerie
The Ducrows	Edward Flexmore
W. C. Murphy	Harry Moulton
The Dorr Family	The Gillettes
John Purvis	Richard Louis
Tote Ducrow	Lulu Gardner
Mrs. Frank Gardner	Frank Gardner

Little Lulu received a gift of a gold necklace and charm at the matinee June 28. Richard Foster joined the show in charge of advertising. The boss canvas man was Bert Hall. The show set out on a royal mail steamer on or about July 7 for the traveling season. "As at all times with Gardner," the *Clipper* reported, "the ghost walks regularly." This was circus parlance to mean that everyone was paid promptly on time. In July it was reported that "Murphy and Moulton, horizontal bar performers, are doing passing long somersaults and the double fly overs together with the Circo Gardner, South America." This was most likely what is called a "passing act," or a "double flying bar act" on the trapeze. The ever popular Little Lulu Gardner was given a testimonial birthday benefit August 5 (the *New York Dramatic News* article of 1891 had stated that Lulu was born May 9) in Georgetown, British Guiana, her mother's home. The Gardner circus remained at Cayenne for seventeen days before proceeding to Parimaribo for twenty-five days more. Their tent was said to be 115 foot in diameter with 50 foot center pole. John Purvis was serving as equestrian director and clown. At Paramaribo Frank Gardner "walked or fell out of the hotel window" in his sleep "to the hard stone sidewalk, a distance of seventeen feet." He recovered in only a day or two, and it was called a "miraculous escape." The *Clipper* reported November 7 that Bellotta Ducrow, who did an aerial act with Louis Ducrow, had married William Ware, an English jockey rider who had joined the show with the Frank Brown Circus.

The Donovan and Nelson Circus sailed for South America June 10. They recruited a performer named Mlle. Zeigler. Donovan advertised for talent in all branches of the business for a tour of the West Indies, Central and South America departing November 14. He particularly requested hearing from riders, with or without their own stock; a three



The Earle Sisters performed a trapeze act throughout the 1890s.

Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library

bar team, a three brother act, a flying act or "any act that is novelty and not depending on the English language. Those that do two or more acts preferred." The ad was signed, James Donovan & Co., 108 Fourth Ave., New York City. The James Donovan Circus sailed November 29 of 1896 to Port Liman, Castle Reid, Costa Rica, Central America "with big success." From there they went to San Jose, opening December 26 and playing San Salvador for six weeks into the new year after that.⁴⁸

1897

The Frank Gardner Circus was reportedly having trouble with weather and yellow fever as the new year began in 1897. "In the present the outlook begins to look quite gloomy," the *Clipper* reported, though they were reportedly having success. Rain had caused their canvas to be "tattered and torn." Jim Dorr (also called William H. Dorr) died at Saint-Pierre, Martinique, French West Indies from the ef-

fects of injuries suffered over the years from his aerial act. He had been born in San Francisco, California in July of 1862. The Gardner show continued on to Guadeloupe. Edward Flexmore, the great English clown departed the show with his wife, Madame Eleana, and the west Indian negro "prodigy" dwarf, "Eccentric Chocolotte," to tour the smaller towns. The Gillettes, bicyclists; Louis Ducrow, aerialist; and Col. Jesse Foster also left the Gardner show. Gardner planned to leave for the island of Guadeloupe soon, where the show would break up. The company was in good health although "spirits are depressed." Their morale was not likely improved over the next few weeks. At Pointe-a-Pitre, on the island of Guadeloupe, southeast of Puerto Rico, West Indies, the show spent fourteen days in quarantine and lost another week for repairs of the big top. From there they planned to go on to the city of Basse Terre. Horizontal bar performers, Moulton and Murphy were said to be a big hit. Those leaving the show were: the Gillettes (to New Orleans); manager Col. Jesse Foster (to New York); and the Ducrows (to New York). Others who would leave in January were canvas man, Hawley; Mrs. Dorr; and Ernie and Moulton. Those remaining were:

Louis, mule rider
Silvern
and the monkey, Jesse

William Ware
Lulu Gardner

Jesse Foster left the Gardner show one last time in 1897, joining the James Donovan circus at some time before the fall of the year. Mr. Flexmore, English clown, his wife and "Chocolotte" were the last of the Gardner circus tour of 1897 to be heard from. The *Clipper* reported that they arrived in New York in July of 1898. The roster of the Donovan show at the beginning of 1897 was:

James Donovan
Robert Stickney
Mrs. Donovan and child
Ada Castello
Charles Drayton
Clarence Bowman
Eddie Brisbane
Fred Heiler

Frank Long
Mrs. Robert Stickney and child
Daniel Castello
Jack Cousins
Rahella Judge
Harry Bowman
John Hagman
Johnny Saunders

Also with the traveling show was the Japanese Manichi (or Manikichi) troupe, including Mannichi Tarro and Homan. Eddie Brisbane was the boss canvas man with eight assistants, John Hagman and Fred Heiler were private grooms, and Johnny Saunders was interpreter and general assistant.

The Donovan show followed San Salvador showing in La Libertad. The proprietors were James Donovan and Frank J. Long. Robert Stickney was listed as the equestrian



Map of the 1897 route



The performers of the 1897 Stickney and Donovan Circus.

Circus World Museum

director, but by October he had purchased Frank Long's partnership in the show. The roster in mid-March had expanded since the beginning of 1897:

The Royal Mannichi Troupe of Japan	
Dave Castello	Herr Drayton
Clarence Bowman	Harry Bowman
The Lamartine Brothers	Alfred Bannack
Roman Bannack	Emma Stickney
Ada Castello	Mrs. J. Donovan
Ada Bannack	John Saunders
Ed Brennan	John Cunningham
Fred Heiler	

Dave and Ada Castello performed as riders, as did Emma Stickney who was listed as principal and jockey rider. Mrs. Stickney also performed, as Mlle. Rezac on the trapeze. Herr Drayton was a strong man, Clarence and Harry Bowman performed as aerialists and gymnasts, and the Lamartine Brothers were acrobats. Mrs. J. Donovan performed on the flying rings and Ada Bannack on the flying trapeze. Alfred and Roman Bannack were clowns. John Saunders presented a comic mule act. Ed Brennan served as boss canvas man, John Cunningham on chandeliers, and Fred Heiler was boss groom.

The Donovan and Stickney show had eight horses, one pony, one mule, and a full troupe of riding and trained dogs. Rohella Judge, clown and acrobat, and John Cousins, a rid-

er, had returned to the U.S. Donovan's New North American Circus advertised its 15th annual tour in October with James Donovan and Robert Stickney proprietors and Jesse W. Foster, general agent. They requested artists of every line doing two or more first class acts; male or female riders with or without stock, horizontal bars, brothers, aerial acts, Japanese, special sensational novelty acts, and a "pickaninny band, colored." They sailed on or about November 16, listing their address as: James Donovan at No. 108 Fourth Avenue, New York N. Y. A post script was added: "Would buy Leaping Hounds."⁴⁹

1898

By March the Frank Gardner circus was at the Island of St. Croix, in the Virgin Islands east of Puerto Rico, playing small towns by chartered schooner. William Dorr's widow, Josephine, had remarried Bert Hall, boss canvas man. October 8 Frank A. Gardner, his wife and daughter, Lulu Gardner, arrived in New York from St. Thomas along with his performing monkey, Jesse. By mid-November, the *Clipper* reported, Frank Gardner and "his bareback riding baboon" were back in the U.S. on the roster of John B. Doris and Gil Robinson's Winter Circus.

1898 was the last year the *New York Clipper* carried news of the Frank A. Gardner Circus traveling south of the United States, and though a report claimed that he was organizing a new circus to take to South America as late as 1903, it may be assumed that he never left the U. S. again

after 1897. This author has found little of Gardner's activities subsequent to the 1897-1898 season in South America. By the late 1890s Frank Gardner had established residence in Wheeling, West Virginia. The adopted daughter, Lea Lulu Gardner, is found participating in juvenile theatricals at the Lincoln School in Wheeling, and, presumably, the Gardners were encouraging her to participate, if not pursue, a



*Robert Stickney.
1879. Equestrean*

Robert Stickney, 1897.

Circus World Museum

career in the field of entertainment. As yet little is known about what happened to Lulu after 1898. A Lulu Gardner was listed among the performers, which also included the Earle Sisters, on the Sells & Gray show's Concert roster in June of 1901.⁵⁰ Among several other erroneous remarks published in the Quincy, Illinois newspapers at the time of Frank Gardner's death, it was said that Frank A. Gardner left only an adopted son. Mildred Gardner, we are told, died in about 1901. His obituaries, published in the *Clipper* and the *Billboard* stated that he had been serving as equestrian director for the Van Amburg show for the past five years, but

he was not on the roster of the Van Amburg and Gallagher Combined Shows which appeared in the *Clipper* June 23, 1900. The Quincy, Illinois obituaries stated that he had been organizing street fairs for several years.

In March of 1899 the *Clipper* carried the news that Gardner's old mentor, "Col." James T. Johnson, "proprietor and manager of Johnson's Amphitheatre, Hot Springs, Ark. died April 30 at his home in that city, from pneumonia. Col. Johnson was about sixty years of age. In the summer of 1896 he located in Hot Springs, and erected the amphitheatre which bore his name. He leaves a married daughter, who is with the Barnum and Bailey Circus, in London, Eng. The remains were interred May 1 in Hot Springs."

Jerry Mugivan related the following anecdote for the *Billboard* March 19, 1921 concerning a shrine show he had managed in 1904, when Frank Gardner had served as equestrian director:

... we opened in Atlanta under the auspices of the Shrine... Our first equestrian director was Frank A. Gardiner [sic], the double somersault leaper... I remember Mr. Gardiner had three high school horses with the show. He had Jim Ward working for him. It seems that Gardiner owed Ward for salary and the latter threatened to sue. Frank offered to settle by giving Jim one of the horses. It was a good horse and Jim agreed. So they finished the season amicably together. However, when the show closed, Gardiner presented Ward with a bill for feed. It came to the same amount of Gardiner's original debt to Ward. Jim could not pay, and he lost the horse. It was a painless method of paying off an obligation. In time Jim told the joke on himself. 'Well, it was a horse on me,' he would conclude. Gardiner had a dog with the show. It was a busy little tyke, but foolish. Every night it would round up a bone, and, with admirable foresight, bury it under the stake and chain wagon. It knew the wagon and the relative position it occupied on the lot. Next morning, after the train had moved sixty or one hundred miles, the pup would frisk onto the new lot and scoot for the stake and chain. Then it would dig earnestly for the bone. Failing to find it where it he remembered placing it, the puzzled little pup would paw up every foot of ground under the wagon, while the bosses had their daily laugh.

This incident, seeming somewhat uncharacteristic of Frank's earlier dealings with the performers of his show, had no doubt happened after he had lost everything to failed investments. Frank Gardner would be dead within the year.

He died at the age of 50, on October 9, 1905 at Kessler Hospital in Huntington, West Virginia. The details of his death were recorded by his surgeon, Dr. Kessler:

If you remember when he came here (to the Kessler hospital) he was suffering from what he thought was rheumatism in his hips, but it proved to be a large abscess, which formed in the right groin and lower part of the abdomen. We operated upon him in August and removed several pints of pus from the abdominal cavity; puss continued to drain for some time, and he was getting up and we thought was going to recover, when the disease developed in the other side, which proved to be too much for his run down condition, and he died on the date stated above. Those abscesses were due to a diseased bone in the spine between the hips. He had undoubtedly received a bruise or injury at some time which caused the abscesses to form.

Gardner's malady may have been the result of an old leaping or riding injury, or it may have come from the fall he had taken from the third-story window in 1896. Gardner's wife, Cora, according to the Quincy, Illinois newspapers at the time of his death, had died four years earlier, in 1901.

Gardner's former partner, James Donovan, continued touring South America for the rest of the season. In 1898 the Donovan and Stickney's Combined North American Circus is found at San Jose, Costa Rica following a tour of Jamaica doing great business. The roster read:

James Donovan	Robert Stickney
Col. Jesse W. Foster	The Bannacks
Emma Stickney	Fukino's troupe
Frank Miller	Fannie Miller
The Sotelella Brothers	Alice
Madam Bonne	

Col. Jesse W. Foster was once again serving as representative and general manager. The Bannacks were listed as French clowns, acrobats and musicians. Emma Stickney was principal bareback equestrienne and a high wire performer, while Frank and Fannie Miller presented principal male bareback hurdle, two horse carrying, and three horse ménage acts. Fukino's troupe included Japanese acrobats, monkeys and musicians. The Sotelella Brothers performed trapeze and acrobatic acts and played the Scotch bag pipes. A performer named Alice danced and gave a dislocation and contortion act. Madam Bonne was billed as the female Hercules and "new woman ménage of high school horsemanship." Robert Stickney was exhibiting a dancing dog and a bounding jockey riding dog.

Col. Foster left for New York on business in January.

In April Robert Stickney reportedly sold his interest in the Stickney and Donovan Circus to James Donovan and returned to New York with his wife and Dolly Miller, but Donovan might have retained the right to use Stickney's name in the show title. A roster for "Stickney and Donovan's New American Circus" was published once again in December. The Stickney and Donovan Circus closed in Venezuela in May. James Donovan reportedly traveled from Georgetown en route to New York, and in September Col. Jesse W. Foster sailed south again with a new show. The roster of the Stickney and Donovan show in 1898 was listed as:

Fukino's Royal Japanese Troupe	
James Donovan	Robert Stickney
Col. Jesse W. Foster	E. P. Myerson
The Bannacks	The Millers
Sutcliff Family	Emma Stickney
Mlle. Rezac	Leoni Rohne
Sisters Tremaine	Prof. J. H. Smith



Emma Stickney as photographed by Frederick W. Glasier, circa 1905.
The Ringling, Glasier Collection

E. P. Myerson was the business manager. The Sutcliff Family, four in number, were acrobats and Scotch bag pipers, and Leoni Rohne performed as a strongman and gymnast. The Sisters Tremaine, Aimee, Viola, and Lucille, were acrobats. Once again, Emma Stickney was performing as an equestrienne and also, listed as Mlle. Rezac, on the flying rings and trapeze. Fukino's Royal Japanese Troupe was now seven in number and the show included a troupe of performing grey hounds (nine in number). Prof. J. H. Smith led a band composed of "fifteen pickaninnies."

They opened at Kingston, Jamaica on December 9 for

ten days, and then moved on to San Jose, Costa Rica for a season of seven weeks.

James Donovan arrived in New York from Havana the first of April, 1899, having closed the season at Matanzas, Cuba having good business for the past ten weeks. Donovan sailed again for Brazil, South America May 15, and return to New York on or about September 15. Donovan is next found operating the New York Vaudeville Company, which combined with Lumier's Cinematograph Company in March of 1900. Emma Donovan, "late of the Four Earle Sisters" had joined the Forepaugh Sells Bros. Circus at the opening in Madison Square Garden doing a flying ring act. This was the last year that James Donovan is found operating a circus in South America.

Edward Shipp, half-brother of Gardner's former partner, Harry Lamkin, had taken over the ring barn in Petersburg, Illinois after Lamkin's death, and continued to train and present circus performances there. Shipp was then the equestrian director for the Ringling Brothers Circus, which brought some of the finest talent in the nation under his influence. In time he formed his own circus with partner, Roy Feltus, touring Central and South America through the decade of the 1920s, carrying on the great tradition of Illinois circus men in the southern hemisphere. Shipp operated the winter quarters in Petersburg for a number of years, and opened a training barn in Havana, Illinois, which he placed under the management of the great equestrienne, Linda Jeal and her adopted daughter, Dallie Julian.

The Legacy of the Frank A. Gardner Circus

To what can we ascribe the incredible tenacity that compelled Frank Gardner and his many performers and staff members to travel to some of the most remote areas in the Western Hemisphere? What compelled them to keep returning to the Indies, Central and South America year after year even after they had lost one fortune after another? Performers generally share a number of attributes in common. They are naturally gifted with talents. They have a solid work ethic and seek to achieve high standards of perfection in the execution of their performance. They find in this extraordinary gift the opportunity to express themselves in unique ways. They rightly expect to earn material rewards for their work and ability; but money is always secondary to their first motive, which is the intrinsic rewards that come from the act of expression in itself.

People go to the circus to be amazed. There are two major aspects that run through the history of art; Discipline and Novelty. The performance must have precise execution, control and discipline if it is to be done well, especially when the performance is a dangerous one. It must have spontaneity, variety and novelty if it is going to keep anyone's interest. Almost by its very definition the circus has all of these things. When it is done well even the most disciplined

performance can seem fresh and exciting every time, and it is certainly amazing. But what motivates the performers themselves to repeat the same performance daily for years on end? The Frank A. Gardner Circus brought some of the most disciplined and novel performances to areas that had never seen such extraordinary exhibitions before, while traveling to such far-flung (even remote) areas that offered the performers themselves new and unexpected experiences. The performers did it because, by their very nature, they sought to escape from their comfort zones, to face challenges and rewards just such as these.

Author's Note

The main purpose of this chronicle is to consolidate information from many different sources. Routes and rosters may seem tedious, but I consider them necessary for the conscientious documentation and consolidation of the historical record. Most of this information has been acquired through the circus columns of the *New York Clipper* magazine, the principal entertainment publication of the nine-



Edward Shipp, Barnum and Bailey Circus, 1909.

Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library

teenth century. As such, it is subject to the eccentricities of the correspondents who communicated with the *Clipper*, and the caprices of their writing and spelling styles. These anomalies, no doubt, posed some challenges to the editors of the *Clipper* at the time, and those challenges have been passed along to us today. Some performers' occupations were listed, some were not. Their names were often spelled differently from one post to the next, and this may lead to some confusion. It should be noted, for instance, that Mrs. Frank Gardner's first name was Cora, but, professionally, she went by the name of Mildred. For clarity of the information, the names have been standardized, using William L. Slout's *Olympians of the Sawdust Circle* as the primary reference.

There were, of course, other circuses touring Central and South America; the Lowande family circus and the Orrin Brothers show, for instance, but this study has focused on Frank A. Gardner and his business associates. At any rate, in spite of these difficulties the information is presented with only slight interpretation to establish a more-or-less accurate record of the Frank A. Gardner Circus and its contemporaries.

I have also made an effort to illustrate the extent of Gardner's travels from year to year (only the Gardner show) with the use of the following maps: *The Rand, McNally & Company Atlas* of 1883, Chicago, Illinois (map of South America); *W. & A. K. Johnston Atlas* of 1894, Edinburgh & London (map of South America), and *The Citizen's Atlas* of 1898, John Bartolomew & Co., Edinburgh (map of Mexico, Central America and West Indies). Obviously, the information that Gardner's circus was able to provide the *Clipper* describing its travels had serious limitations, and should be considered with a margin of error in mind; sometimes predicting their movements in advance, sometimes recalling, more or less accurately, their travels in the past. The reader also should bear in mind that the division in time year-by-year is arbitrary, since the Gardner circus did not end its season as U. S. circuses did, but continued touring from one

year into the next.

An effort has been made to provide background information about some of the performers mentioned in the rosters whenever possible. Though far from comprehensive, this information may enable the reader to begin further research on these individuals.

Future researchers may also be interested to know that this article was put together during the transitional period of historical investigation; compiled mostly by the "old method" with thirty years of tedious scrolling through hundreds of weekly columns of microfilm; and partly with the



A Strobbridge Litho poster celebrating Frank Gardner's performing talents.

The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

explosion of information which has come available recently through internet sources such as the "Chronicling America" Library of Congress website. This combination of methods and access to sources has made the character of this article what it is, for better or worse. **Bw**

Steve Gossard is the Curator of Circus Collections at the Milner Library at Illinois State University. With a BA and MA in Art History from ISU, Steve began to do circus research in 1984 when asked by the University's Museums Department to curate an exhibit from the circus collection at Milner Library. His goal from the beginning was to document in detail the fascinating history of the circus in the Normal-Bloomington area. His research expanded to include the development of trapeze and the history of circus in Illinois. In 1991 Steve published *A Reckless Era of Aerial Performance, the Evolution of Trapeze (revised in 1994)*, the most comprehensive history of trapeze to date. He has published twelve articles in *Bandwagon* magazine and several shorter works in *White Tops* and *Circus Report*. He has also written a fiction manuscript which has yet to be published. Steve is currently working on an article about the Young Buffalo Wild West Show of Peoria, Illinois.

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Mystery of the 1883 Ringling Bros. Handbill

by Larry Kellogg

The five Ringling brothers first entered the tented-circus business in 1884 with a show they called Yankee Robinson and Ringling Brothers Great Double Shows and Caravan. The boys had been working toward this day for some time. Al Ringling had even been performing with several traveling shows beginning in 1879, including Parson and Roy's Great Palace Show.

In November 1882, the Ringling brothers started a show called The Ringling Classic and Comic Concert Company. For their second season, they opened in Ironton, Wisconsin, on August 20, 1883, with Ringling Bros. Grand Carnival of Fun. These shows played in town halls and opera houses, and featured songs, dancing, comedy sketches, and juggling.

Because of this historic beginning, it's no wonder I was amazed and thrilled to come across an advertisement for an 1883 Ringling Bros. poster. The March 14, 1972, issue of the *Antique Trader* had an advertisement placed by a Chicago antique shop that read:

1883 Ringling Bros.
Rare Early Date
Nice Red & Black "Posters"
Near Mint as They Were
Part of a Small Hoard
Found Several Years Ago.
About 6 inches by 18 inches

I called immediately. The antique dealer confirmed that this was an authentic handbill and had the title "Ringling Bros. Classic and Comic Concert Company—Ringling Bros. Grand Carnival of Fun." The date at the bottom of the handbill was August 20, 1883, Ironton, Wisconsin. The dealer followed up with a letter, writing:

"Having handled many old paper collectibles over the years:

"1. The paper looks proper and the yellowing edges right

"2. They are printed letterpress not offset and were found as a roll . . . most are mint."

He then called and told me he had sold a few, but

Fabricated Herald for Ringling Bros. Classic and Comic Concert Company—Ringling Bros. Grand Carnival of Fun.
The Ringling, Tibbals Collection

Ringling Bros. Classic and Comic Concert Co.

TONIGHT

Ringling Bros. Grand Carnival of Fun

FUN! FUN! FUN!

THE FUNNIEST and MOST REFINED
SHOW PARTY ON THE ROAD

A Show For The Rich, A Show For The Poor, A Show For The Old, A Show For The Young,
A Show For Everybody.

Note Our Excellent Program For Tonight And Observe
We Carry It Out To The Letter.

PROGRAM

Overture—Sans Souci. Violin Charles Ringling.
Organ Alf. T. Ringling.

Next We Have A Real Live Dude, In Dudsish Delineation. Songs & Sayings J. Ringling.
Just A Few Minutes with America's Cornet Virtuoso, Rendering Levy's and
Arbuckle's Difficult Solos. Alf. T. Ringling.

Then Comes The Great Plate Spinner,
Gravity Defying, Manipulator And Balancer, Albert Ringling.

Following This Charles Ringling Will Introduce His Motto And Tropical Songs.

After This We Will Present Our Roaring Comedy Play Entitled:—
(Ki-Ko-Kan-Kum)

Cast of Characters.

Pat Mullen, A Bad Man John Ringling.
Mr. George Myers, A Property Owner Chas. Ringling.
Prof. Kinsley, A Purchaser Alf. T. Ringling.
Tom Sands, With An Eye To Business Al. Ringling.
Sheriff, Otto Ringling.
Minstrel Overture Chas. And Alf. T. Ringling.

Then We Will Have Fifteen Minutes In Ireland, Songs, Dances, Funny Sayings, Irish Witticisms
Etc. By John Ringling, The Funny Irish Comedian of the Period. Everybody Prepare To Laugh. He
Will Introduce His Original Parody Version of (Over The Garden Wall).

Then Comes The Great Innovator, Juggler And Balancer, In Refind And Pleasing Performance, In-
troducing Wonderful Feats Of Equation With Hats, Balls, Globes, Knives, Feathers, Buggy Whips,
Pipes Etc. With Which He Pleases and Astonishes The Audience.

Again We Have John Ringling, The Emperor Of Dutch Comedians. In His Very Funny Dutch Man-
euvers, Creating Roars Of Laughter with Every Move and Expression. You Laugh as You Have never
Laughed Before. John Will Introduce Dutch Songs, Positions, Jokes, and Sayings, Hibdy-Dibdy
Fazes And His Roaring Song & Dance In Big Wooden Shoes.

And Now Comes A Delightful and Pleasing Musical Act by Alf. T. Ringling and Charles Ringling.
Playing On Twelve Different Musical Instruments, To The Great Delight Of the Audience.

And Last But Not Least Our Fanny After Piece Intitled.
Room 35. Or Trouble In A Hotel

Cast of Characters

Ferdinand Kline, A Dutchman In Search Of Lodging John Ringling.
Pat O'Rourke, An Irishman Wanting A Days Board Alf. T. Ringling.
Dew Drop Snowflake, A Base Drum Soloist Otto Ringling.
Mr. White, A Boarder With A Headache Al. Ringling.
Mr. Gordon, A Troubled Landlord Chas. Ringling.

Good Night.

Doors Open At Seven O'clock. Fun Begins At 8 O'Clock Sharp

Performance at The Opera House, Ironton, Wisconsin, Mon. Aug. 20th. 1883.

still had 44 of the handbills left. So, we negotiated a price for the remaining lot.

I was so excited when they arrived in April. What a find! The following month, I attended the annual convention of Circus Fans Association of America in Sarasota, Florida. To my surprise, there was talk about a great discovery of an 1883 handbill. Two of these had been framed and were presented with great fanfare to the Ringling Museum of the Circus and the Circus Hall of Fame, both located there in Sarasota. I correctly assumed these were some of the handbills sold before my purchase of the rest.

In the ensuing months, I ran advertisements in some of the circus fan magazines hoping to sell a few of the handbills to recoup my investment. Some were sold to well-known circus collectors and historians, including two to Charles Philip "Chappie" Fox, the author of more than 30 books, many about circus history. Fox had just left his position as director of the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin, to become vice president and research director for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus World theme park near Orlando, Florida. Everyone was convinced this was an historic find and that the handbills were, indeed, authentic.

Even though all the circus experts were certain, I wanted confirmation. On a business trip to Washington, D.C., in 1976, I made an appointment to meet with an associate curator from the Division of Graphic Arts at the Smithsonian Institution. She examined one of the fliers and asked if I would leave it with her. I did, and a month later, she returned the handbill with a letter stating the following:

"I have had more time to examine your poster, and here are my findings:

"The bold red and black letters, 'Ringling Bros. . . ' at the top of the sheet are derived from the typeface Cooper Black—a face that was designed in the 1920s.

That settles the matter of date very easily.

"It appears to me that these letters are printed from a line-engraving, i.e. A reproduction of printed type, while the program is printed from actual type . . ."

The poster is obviously a so-called "fantasy item" as no original of this paper is known to exist. Much of the text is clearly drawn from a true 1882 herald, a copy of which is in the collection of Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin, but it has been edited to highlight the Ringlings' performances. I have shared this story with many historians and collectors, but no one has come up with an answer about its real origin. We may never know. It's possible it was created by Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey to promote the 1933 Golden Jubilee Show, perhaps by Roland Butler, who designed the cover for that year's program. But that's just a guess. If anyone knows more about this item, I'd love to hear from you. **Bw**

CHS member Larry Kellogg writes a blog about collecting circus memorabilia for the antiques and collectibles website WorthPoint.com. This article previously ran on that site and is reprinted here with its permission.

Larry Kellogg is a former print journalist and public relations professional, having served as the television/radio editor for the St. Petersburg Times and Promotion Manager for WFLA-TV (NBC affiliate), WFLA-AM and WFLA-FM in Tampa, Florida. He was later Marketing Director for the Bayfront Center Arena and Theatre in St. Petersburg. He holds the distinction as the longest-running Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus local press representative, working with The Greatest Show On Earth in the Sun Coast area for 34 consecutive seasons from 1971 through 2004. He also served a stint as Communications Manager of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus World theme park near Orlando.

TO-NIGHT!
RINGLING BROS.'
GRAND
CARNIVAL OF FUN!
FUN! FUN! FUN!
The Funniest and Most Refined Show Party on the Road.

A Show for the Rich: A Show for the Poor: A Show for the Old: A Show for the Young: A Show for EVERYBODY.

NOTE OF OUR EXCELLENT PROGRAMME FOR TO-NIGHT AND SEE THAT WE CARRY IT OUT TO THE LETTER.

PROGRAMME:

OVERTURE—"San Souci."—By our Parlor Orchestra.

Next we have a **—REAL LIVE DUDE—** Dudley Delineations.
"Charles Augustus," the Dude, by **John Ringling.**

Now a few minutes with **AMERICA'S CORNET VIRTUOSO**, rendering Levy's and Arbuckle's difficult solos, **Alf. Ringling.**

Then comes the **MAN SERPENT**, the boneless wonder, the wonder of the 19th century, the limberest man known, **Mr. Fred C. Hall.**

After which we will have some very refined and pleasing clog exercises, showing how the boys and girls dance in Lancashire, by the champion clog dancer of the world, **Abe Sands.**

Trombone Solo selected, discoursing difficult selections on his new "gold and silver" Trombone, **Chas. Ringling.**

Then we will have **FIFTEEN MINUTES IN IRELAND**, songs, dances, funny sayings, Irish witticisms, etc., by John Ringling, the funny Irish comedian of the period; everybody prepare to laugh. He will also introduce his original parody version of "Over the Garden wall."

After which will be presented our roaring funny comedy entitled, **"KI-KO-KAN-KUM,"**

CAST OF CHARACTERS: JOHN RINGLING.
Pat Mullen,—an Irish hummer, **CHAS. RINGLING.**
Mr. Geo. Myers,—a property owner, **ABE SANDS.**
Prof. Kingsley,—a purchaser, **ALF. RINGLING.**
Tom Sands,—with an eye to business, **MR. DIALO.**
Sheriff, **MR. DIALO.**

OVERTURE,—Selected,—by our Parlor Overture.

Then comes the great Innovator, Juggler, Balancer, Plate and Hat Spinner, **MR. FRED HALL**, in a refined and pleasing performance, introducing wonderful feats of equation with hats, balls, globes, plates, feathers, buggy whips, pipes, etc., etc., with which he pleases and astonishes the audience.

MOTTO SONG,—"God knows what you'll do before you die," **C. RINGLING.**

Next comes our feature, **PROF. RICH DIALO**,
"The Human Volcano," the "Salamander," the "Fire King," a marvelous performance for scientists, a study for physicians. Everybody exclaims, "How is it done?" He sits off bars of red hot iron, eating boiling and blazing sealing-wax, and many other wonderful feats, closing his performance by allowing anybody to come from the audience, and melt lead and pour it into his mouth. He also turns himself into a human volcano. We challenge the world to equal this man's wonderful performance.

Again we have John Ringling, the Emperor of all Dutch dialect comedians, in his very funny Dutchy maneuvers, creating roars of laughter with every move and every expression. You will laugh as you never laughed before.

John will introduce songs, positions, jokes, Dutchy sayings, Hilly, Dilly faxes, and his roaring song and dance in his wooden shoes.

And now comes a delightful and pleasing musical act by Alf. and Chas. Ringling playing on 12 different musical instruments to the great delight of the audience.

And last but not least comes our funny after-piece,
"Trouble in a Hotel, or a Nuisance Overcome."

CAST OF CHARACTERS: JOHN RINGLING.
FERDINAND ELKER, a Dutchman in search of lodgings, **ALF. RINGLING.**
PAT O'ROCKE, an Irishman wanting day-board, **FRED C. HALL.**
DEW-DROP, SNOW-FLAKE, a base-drain soloist, **MR. DIALO.**
MR. WHITE, a boarder with headache, **ABE SANDS.**
ED. BRYKE, a pickpocket and hotel-bait, **CHAS. RINGLING.**
MR. GORDON, a trouble landlord, **CHAS. RINGLING.**

GOOD-NIGHT.

Door open at 7.00. Fun begins at 8 o'clock sharp.

Original 1882 Herald for Ringling Bros. Grand Carnival of Fun. Circus World

RINGLING BROS. & BARNUM & BAILEY

THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH



Built To Amaze!



LEGENDS

Come Celebrate America's Living National Treasure® with Your Family!



#RinglingBros

Ringling.com

RINGLING BROS. & BARNUM & BAILEY
Center for Elephant Conservation

FEW
ENTERTAINMENT